

"When you perform in other villages, people often ask you to play pop music and other songs."  
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The coach's decision to send the four national team members home aroused a storm of controversy.  
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"I am happy to win the Women's World Cup with my team, but personally, I am happier to get the title of world's best setter."  
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## Cell Phone Paranoia

Hit movie triggers war of the sexes

By Sun Ming

"Don't take your wife or girlfriend to see *Cell Phone*, you'll be in trouble if you do!" The warning, only half joking, has become a commonly heard idiom among Chinese men who have seen the popular new movie.

Whether such concern is exaggerated or not, the movie *Cell Phone* (*Shouji*) has certainly become a hot conversation topic. Last Friday, *Beijing Today* reported an incident in Tianjin, in which a couple, after watching the film, got into a heated argument that ended with the husband throwing his cell phone at his wife's head. The blow landed her in hospital with a mild concussion.

Some describe the film, directed by Feng Xiaogang, as a "horror movie," because it supposedly makes women suspicious about their husband or boyfriend's activities, creates tension among couples and even ignites family warfare!

Unlike the usual New Year's films, which are generally characterized by their light, feel-good themes, *Cell Phone* addresses some serious and quite disturbing themes. Up to January 7, the national box-office take for *Cell Phone*, which opened on December 17, had reached 45 million yuan.

### Phone trickery

Yan Shouyi (Ge You), is the host of a TV talk show program. He uses various tricks with his cell phone throughout the movie in order to hide his secret love affair from his wife.

He takes the battery out to make him "unable to be reached," and uses such excuses as being in the subway or an elevator to cover his "disappearance." He deletes incriminating messages before he gets home, and tells his wife he is in a meeting if she calls him while he is with his lover. And he often pretends the connection is bad and that he is unable to hear the caller. Eventually, how-

ever, Yan is betrayed by his cell phone records and messages.

"After watching the film, people become eager to check their partner's cell phone for call records or to browse through their short messages. They want to discover the secrets behind their partner's cell phone," *Beijing Star Daily* reported last Tuesday.

Liu Gang (a pseudonym) an employee of a computer company in Zhongguancun, complained to *Beijing Today* Monday that his wife has been "enlightened" by the movie and says he regrets taking her to see it.

"We got along well with each other before, but we often quarrel since seeing the movie. She has begun to check my cell phone!" said Liu.

However, Liu's wife Wei Xin (also a pseudonym) maintained she is being reasonable when she gave her side of the story to *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

"Sometimes he looked nervous when his cell phone rang at home. I didn't really pay any attention to this before, but I became more alert after watching *Cell Phone*," she said. "Like Yan Shouyi, my husband also often says he is in a meeting when I call his cell phone."

Zhao Lin, 35, a laid-off worker, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday that before watching the film, she had no idea as to why she always heard the recording "the person you called cannot be reached" when she called her husband's cell phone. "I'm not sure whether my husband has ever played the same tricks on me," she said.

Jia Lihua (pseudonym), a college teacher in Beijing, says she thinks that *Cell Phone* is very realistic, which explains the widespread reaction to it. "Some of my friends and colleagues often use their cell phones to play similar tricks on their wife or husband," Jia told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

Jia says she, too, has used such

## Season's Greetings!

By Xiao Rong

To mark the coming Chinese lunar New Year, *Beijing Today* is publishing a 24-page Spring Festival Special.

In the first part of our holiday special, we present information about dining, shopping, what's on and special holiday activities, such as traditional and modern temple fairs.

The second part focuses on topical feature stories. You can read about talented foreign contestants in the "2004 Arts from Our Land Competition." You can also learn about how local expats get the most out of the traditional holiday. There is also a run down on how Beijingers pray for New Year's blessings. And you may be interested to read about how Li Guang, a Peking

Opera performer, made his reputation in the role of Monkey King.

As the coming year is the Year of the Monkey, the third section tells you everything you ever wanted to know about monkeys and more.

Enjoy our holiday special and the coming Year of Monkey.

Happy Spring Festival!  
*Beijing Today* will resume publication on January 30.

## Beijing Comes to Paris

By Su Wei

Chen Xiaomei says she can think of no more exciting a way of celebrating her 50th birthday on January 24 than performing *yangge*, a Chinese folk dance, in a parade on the Champs Elysees in Paris.

Deputy mayor of Paris, Pierre Schapira, was quoted in local media as saying, "We believe that during the Year of Chinese Culture, which is currently underway in France, the city of Paris should have

something special for its celebration."

Including Chen Xiaomei, a resident of Xuanwu District, Beijing, the parade will feature 720 Chinese, including farmers, retired workers and school students as well as Peking opera performances, dragon and lion dances, martial arts show and acrobatics.

The Beijing Culture Week in Paris is the largest overseas culture exchange that Beijing has ever organized. It is a key part of the Year of Chinese Cul-

ture in France, which was proposed by top leaders of the two countries in 1999 and 2000 and kicked off last October.

The opening ceremony of the Culture Week featured a photography exhibition on Beijing's history, with 86 photos taken by French photographers Albert Kahn and Herve Bruhat.

Other programs include television exchange between Beijing and Paris, a trade fair, a book show and a cross-country motor rally.

"With the development of Sino-French ties in mind, three major events will be held this year and the China-France Culture Year will continue. This year sees the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries and in three weeks time, a series of commemorative activities will be held in France. Chinese leaders will also visit France this year," said China's ambassador to France, Zhao Jianjun.



Xuanwu District residents rehearse yangge folk dance at Guang'an Stadium on January 6.

Photo by Liu Ping

tricks to deceive her husband or friends. "Cell phones are high-tech products. They bring convenience to your life, but also mean that you can be easily found, no matter where you are," says Jia, "We all need a bit of privacy."

### Don't take it seriously

"Don't take the film too seriously. But watch your behavior afterward. If the film dispels what I call toxic factors, without igniting an explosion, that would be ideal," director of the film Feng Xiaogang, told *Beijing Star Daily* last Tuesday.

As to the crisis of trust aroused

from his movie, Feng responded that he wasn't surprised at all. Feng explained that cell phones have a very close relation with people and many people own one. According to the Ministry of Information Industry, the number of mobile phone subscribers in China reached 260 million by the end of 2003.

Li Mingshun, a marriage law expert with the China Law Society, commented that couples should be loyal to each other, but that did not mean there should be no privacy between them. "I don't think that a movie will af-

fect a marriage unless there are already major problems," Li told *Beijing Star Daily* last Tuesday.

### Artistic license

China Mobile, the country's biggest mobile business operator, held a news conference last Friday in Beijing to debunk two plot devices used in the film.

In the movie, Shen Xue (Xiu Fan), Yan's fiancée obtained his cell phone records at a mobile business site by simply producing her own ID card. China Mobile said its users could rest assured that their private information would not be disclosed to a third party, unless

legitimately required by police or court officials.

In another scene, Yan's niece claims that there is a new service to reveal the precise location of a cell phone user. Even the room the person is in could be identified. China Mobile said that with currently available technology, the location of a mobile phone (and presumably, the person holding it) could only be determined to within 200 meters.

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# Third Suspected SARS Case Confirmed

A 35-year-old man was confirmed Monday afternoon as the third new suspected SARS case in China's mainland, according to the Guangdong Provincial Health Department.

The man reported symptoms of fever on December 31 and was sent to the Guangdong Provincial People's

Hospital on January 6. He was transferred to the No. 8 People's Hospital on January 9 and is currently receiving treatment there.

Doctors said that the patient was currently recovering and was likely to be allowed to leave the hospital in a few days, if he showed no further symptoms.

On January 8, a 20-year-old restaurant waitress was confirmed to be a suspected SARS case in Guangzhou.

The woman from central Henan Province reported symptoms of fever on December 26 and is now under quarantine and receiving treatment in the Guangzhou No. 8 People's Hospital.

Meanwhile, a further 52 people

who had contact with the suspected SARS case were also under close medical observation.

A 32-year-old freelance TV worker in Guangdong who was the first confirmed SARS patient in China's mainland since the spring outbreak of the epidemic in 2003, has been discharged from the hospital. (Xinhua News)

## Shrimp and Furniture Producers Contest US Anti-Dumping Suits

By Yu Shanshan

Chinese furniture manufacturers and shrimp producers are condemning recent US anti-dumping measures.

The US International Trade Commission (ITC), in a 6-0 vote, ruled last Friday that Chinese manufacturers are dumping bedroom furniture in the US market at unfairly low prices and damaging US producers.

The ITC's ruling requires the US Commerce Department to start an investigation to determine an appropriate level of offsetting duties. The ITC will then hold a final hearing mid-year and issue an injury determination in autumn this year.

Twenty-seven US companies and four unions in Virginia, North Carolina and 12 other states have asked for duties from 158 percent to 441 percent to offset what they claim to be dumping by 135 Chinese furniture manufacturers.

Chinese furniture makers say the US manufacturing industry will not derive any benefit from the dumping charges.

"Even if the high duty is imposed, no jobs would be created for the US industry," said Liu Shande, manager of Guangdong-based Jixiang Wood Products Company.

Orders would shift from China to other countries like Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, he told Xinhua News Agency.

However, Liu said many Chinese jobs would be lost because of the unfair decision.

Although declining to offer the company's prices for exports, Liu said the exported furniture make more profits than those sold domestically.

"We are not dumping. We export because the products can sell at higher prices than at home," he said.

Meanwhile over 20 Chinese shrimp producers are challenging a petition filed on December 31 by US competitors that claims six countries, including China, had dumped shrimp on the US market at below cost prices, triggering a plunge in the value of US-harvested shrimp from US \$1.25 billion in 2000 to US \$559 million in 2002.

China is expected to face the highest rate of duties – between 119 and 267 percent – of the six countries named in the suit.

Chinese shrimp farmers from Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian provinces have given notice to the ITC, via US lawyers, that they intend to respond to the case.

Shrimp exporters in Guangdong knew a year ago that the US alliance was considering lawsuits against Chinese shrimp imports, and employed lawyers in Beijing, Guangdong and Washington to prepare for their case.

In a statement, an alliance of Chinese shrimp producers said the US group's claims were groundless, quoting a statement by the American Seafood Distributors Association, which said, "These countries can produce shrimp at a much lower cost through farming than can (American) domestic fishermen, who face very high and rapidly increasing fuel, gear, and labor costs."

"The domestic shrimp industry has failed to anticipate the dramatic change in production methods from fishing to farming," the association added.

The European Union and Japan have recently clamped down on shrimp imports because of health concerns about antibiotics in farm-raised shrimp. That forced many exporters into the US market, and contributed to the downward slide in prices.

Guangdong is the most important shrimp producing area in the country.

Guangdong's shrimp exports to the United States are estimated to be worth US \$100 million annually, which will be hit badly if the anti-dumping tariffs are imposed.



Yandaixie Jie at Shishahai

Photo by Photocom

## Shishahai Renovation Set to Start

By Yu Shanshan

Director of Shishahai administration commission Lin Yi told the *Beijing News* Monday that the first phase of a renovation plan for Shishahai has been settled. Yandaixie Jie will be the first street to undergo refurbishment.

Yandaixie Jie was a flourishing commercial street at the end of the Qing Dynasty and during the early Republic of China. But now, the street contains a mixture of shops restaurants and bars, and private houses.

According to the plan, the result of a cooperation project between the municipal government and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO), Yandaixie Jie is to be turned into a traditional culture and trade street.

The area covered by the plan totals 69,000 square meters, and extends south from Gulouxi Dajie to Houmen Bridge, and west from Di'anmenwai Dajie to Houhai, including Xiaoshibei and Dashibei hutongs.

All buildings over two stories will be demolished and there will be a height limit of three meters for one storey and six meters for two storey buildings. Buildings in Dashibei and Xiaoshibei hutongs will be limited to one story.

Buildings in Di'anmenwai and Gulouxi streets will be limited to

two stories, with a maximum height of nine meters.

Di'anmen Store will be demolished to make way for a complex for tourism, restaurants, shopping and entertainment.

Some one story residential buildings on both sides of Yinding Bridge will also be removed this year. More grass areas will be added in front of Guangfu Guan, east of Qianhai, and along the north bank of Beihai, west of Yinding Bridge.

Almost one third of the residents in Yandaixie Jie will be relocated, according to Lin. For those who remain, the government will allocate money for the renovation of their homes.

## Launch of Anti-monopoly Agency Due

A national anti-monopoly administration is to be set up in line with the new anti-trust law to implement uniform competition rules for the Chinese market, a senior official on the law's drafting panel said Monday.

The agency will be established directly under the State Council, said the official, who declined to be named.

Drafting of the law, which has taken a decade, is expected to be completed this year and it will then be submitted to the National People's Congress for review, he said.

Drafting of the anti-trust law began in 1994, but there have been numerous revisions because of controversies, according to the official. The drafting panel is composed of officials in related departments and legal experts.

According to the draft code, the anti-trust administration's portfolio will mainly include policy-making, giving and withdrawing approval on affairs related to anti-monopoly matters, probing competition-related activities of major enterprises and handling cases that violate the anti-trust law.

He elaborated that the anti-monopoly authority under the State Council will have the power to determine the threshold of large-scale mergers.

"If the enterprises involved in a consolidation have a combined annual sales turnover that exceeds the determined threshold, then the merger will require the authority's approval to pro-

ceed," he said.

The administration has a mandate to decide whether to approve large-scale corporate acquisitions within 90 working days of receiving the application.

It is also responsible for regularly publishing a list of operators that have "a dominant market share."

Members of the agency will be selected from professionals with broad experience in economics and law, according to the official.

Lu Fu, a professor from the China University of Political Science and Law, said the key issue for the future is whether the proposed authority will have sufficient power and independence to deal with monopolies.

"The two elements are important to challenge the practices of some government departments that obstruct competition," he said.

The power is also necessary when dealing with enterprises with dominant market power that often possess strong lobbying power, said the professor.

However, a press officer from a multinational company, who spoke on condition of anonymity, expressed concern about the legislation.

"The company has been keeping an eye on the law drafting, which we fear will entitle the government to limit foreign companies' performance in China," she said.

But the official from the drafting panel shrugged off such concerns, saying that the legislation does not target foreign multinationals, but is rather aimed at guaranteeing a fair, competitive environment.

In a move to rein in administrative monopolies, a big problem for foreign companies in China, the law devotes a special chapter to regulate government-related monopolistic activities, he added.

(Xinhua News)

## China Considers Measures against Bird Flu

With an outbreak of bird flu spreading through South Korea, Japan and Vietnam, Chinese authorities are preparing to impose a ban on the import of birds and certain goods from Japan and Vietnam.

Sources with the stock breeding and veterinary bureau under the Ministry of Agriculture said the ban, similar to one placed on birds and related products from South Korea on December 22, could be put in place within the week.

In Guangdong Province, hygiene authorities have so far received no reports on infection cases, but have nevertheless imposed stringent surveillance measures, said Wang Zhiqiong, deputy director of the provincial health bureau.

Meanwhile, chicken farms in and near the province are also scrambling to take preventive measures to prevent infection by the bird flu virus.

Although the three countries are all close to China, the panic in those countries caused by bird flu does not seem to have affected Chinese consumers.

"As the outbreak is not in China, there is no reason for me to stop eating chicken," said Beijing resident Jing Peng.

According to a source with Shouhang Guoli company, which has more than 30 chain stores in Beijing, the bird flu outbreak abroad has not affected sales of poultry. "The chicken we sell is all domestic. People have been coming and buying chicken, just as usual," the source said.

According to Bo Wen, of the China Cuisine Association, 99 per cent of restaurants in the country use domestic chickens and ducks. Ordinary people do not have to worry about the disease, Bo said.

"We have never stopped making efforts for the prevention of bird flu," said Li Yan, of the Beijing station for veterinary health supervision and inspection. Such efforts include the inspections of markets where chicken and other poultry are sold, Li said. (Xinhua News)

### Public Security Review

Emergency 110 calls this week led Beijing police to apprehend 94 people suspected of committing crimes.

Among the criminal cases reported this week, the number of pickpocket offences increased by 68 percent over last week. Taking advantage of the increasing flow of travellers in the lead up to Spring Festival, some criminals have concentrated their activities at railway stations, bus stations and on transport lines.

Police warn that when travellers board buses and trains, they tend to pay attention to the packages in their hands, forgetting about their mobile phones, wallets and other items on their person. Criminals also pick up packages when the owner is taking a nap or talking.

Other criminal activities include scalping train tickets, which are in hot demand by migrant laborers and students leave Beijing for their homes.

Beijing Railway Police have launched a campaign against scalpers, and since last December, have caught 377 scalpers and destroyed 16 illegal ticket-selling stands.

## House Purchase Contract Amended

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The Beijing Municipal Administration of State Land, Resources and Housing has adjusted the regulations governing contracts for the sale and purchase of commercial houses, it announced recently.

According to the administration, the changes are aimed at coordinating with a regulation issued on December 1 last year that the area of presold commercial houses should be priced according to the actual building area, as opposed to the floor space.

The confirmation of area and the management of related disputes should both refer to the construction area.

The management of errors in the estimation of the area should also refer to the construction area. If the error is greater than three percent, the buyer has the right to a refund.

Other changes stipulate delivery terms and preconditions of moving in. Only when all preconditions for moving in are all satisfied can the customers move into the new house. Also, the content of property services is to be added as an attachment to the contract.

Although the contract is still not perfect, it now better protects the interests of house purchasers and owners, according to the administration.

Deng Zemin, a lawyer with Yingdao Law Office commented that all house purchasers should pay attention to the blanks in the contract. All blanks should be filled out after careful negotiation. When some blanks have already been filled by the developers, the buyer should check in case of later disputes.

## Service Industry Convention Scheduled

By Xiao Rong

The first China International Service Industries Convention and Expo is scheduled to be held from June 30 to July 3 in Beijing, the organizing committee announced at a press briefing last Thursday.

The convention, consisting of symposiums and forums, will focus on four sectors of the service industry, namely finance, logistics, tourism and intermediary services. The exposition, to be held at the Beijing Exhibition Center, will cover areas such as financial products and services, modern logistics and intermediary service, and convention and exhibition services.

Domestic and foreign government officials, leaders of major international organizations, experts and entrepreneurs will be invited to discuss the achievements and potential of China's service industries.

Jointly sponsored by the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Commerce, the China Banking Regulatory Commission and the Beijing municipal government, the convention is aimed at providing a platform for international exchanges and cooperation for the upgrade of domestic service industries.

## Northern European Travel Agencies Open

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Three northern European countries - Denmark, Norway and Sweden, have opened travel service agencies recently in Beijing.

The move follows the opening of travel agencies last year by nine other European countries last year, including France, Germany, Italy and Austria.

Chinese tourists will be able to travel to 12 countries in Europe from May. Negotiations on Approved Destination Status between China and other countries of the European Union is still going on, but eventually, the whole of Europe is expected to be open to China.

# AOL Withdraws from Domestic Market

By Tony Shaw

China's leading computer maker Lenovo officially ended cooperation with American Online after buying AOL's 49 percent stake in FM365, a joint venture previously established by the two companies, last Wednesday.

The move also marked AOL's withdrawal from the Chinese Internet industry. AOL, a branch of AOL Time Warner, set up FM365 with Lenovo in mid-2001.

The two sides initially promised to invest \$100 million each to provide Lenovo users with dial-up Internet access, online radio and

portal web services, but those services were never implemented.

"To be frank, AOL did not understand the actual situation in China," said Ma Xuezheng, Lenovo senior vice president, in an interview with *Beijing Morning News* last week, "which made it impossible for us to reach agreements."

Ma added the venture was planned to provide narrowband service to Chinese consumers, but the rapid development of broadband in China rendered that a severely limited market.

Lü Benfu, an IT analyst who participated in the creation of FM365,

told China Central Television last Friday that, the venture was initially aimed at becoming a portal website, but it was not able to carve out a niche in competition with established portal news sites such as Sina and Sohu. Later, the company shifted its focus to education and finance, but failed to achieve success in those areas or in its core businesses of email and news service.

He added that AOL, part of the US' largest media group, faced policy and business scope barriers, while Lenovo had no experience in the Internet industry, two major reasons for the venture's failure.

Lenovo invested \$25 million in the website, but it was always far from profitable and had few remaining employees before last week's move was made. A company spokesman announced at a press conference last week Lenovo would not lose money in the takeover, as the shares were bought at a price set in keeping with the total value of the joint venture's assets.

Ma remains optimistic about the future of FM365. "We will leave the company as it is for now, and I am convinced it can be successful when new opportunities arise," she said.

## Gold Monkey Fever

Local citizens queued up for hours to purchase popular gold jewelry with monkey designs at the Caibai market near Caishikou last Thursday.

Photo by Jia Ting



# Mercedes-Benz Recalls 17 Sedans in China

Mercedes-Benz, a unit of German-US auto giant DaimlerChrysler AG, on Monday announced plans to recall 17 potentially faulty sedans sold in China.

The move is part of the company's global recall of 33,000 vehicles.

The vehicles being recalled are C, CLK and E-class sedans produced between August and October last year, a spokesperson from Mercedes-Benz's Beijing office said yesterday.

"There were isolated cases in which the seat belts failed to click into place correctly," the spokesper-

son said. "For this reason, Mercedes-Benz has decided as a precaution to check all of these vehicles. To date, we have not received any specific complaints from customers."

Mercedes-Benz has reported the situation to both the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of China (AQSIQ) and the China Consumer Association, the spokesperson said. "We are gathering information from our sales networks ... so we can ensure prompt and proper communication with the owners of the vehicles," she added. "These vehicles'

seat belts will be replaced, for free, if necessary."

Mercedes-Benz's recall follows similar moves last year by several other foreign automakers – including Japan-based Honda and Nissan – in China. These voluntary recalls have come as the Chinese Government prepares to implement a national vehicle recall system later this year, according to the AQSIQ.

While vehicle recalls are relatively common in other major markets, especially in the US, the EU and Japan, they remain a sensitive issue for domestic vehicle manufac-

turers, as there is no precedent for such a system in China.

"We should follow international practices, as China's car market is growing very rapidly," said Du Fangci, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. He called the recall system just one aspect of vehicle security management, and added national law concerning vehicle security was badly needed in China.

Domestic automakers must improve product quality, Du concluded. (Xinhua)

## Store Ushers in New Drug Retail Model

By Xiao Rong

With last Friday's opening of a new kind of drugstore that sells both medicines and daily use commodities at only a 10 percent profit margin, local pharmacy chain Develche effectively launched a new business model in Beijing.

The 1,500-square-meter Tianhuide Drugstore stands at the northwest corner of Huayuan Qiao on the West Third Ring Road and stocks and sells over 8,000 kinds of medicines, as well as cosmetics, flowers, health food, baby products and eyeglasses.

"We aim to provide consumers a convenient platform for buying both medicine and general health care products. This drug retail model marks a new concept in the domestic market, and our 10 percent profit margin should set the bottom line in the medicine retail industry," boasted Zhang Yukuan, chairman of Develche Drugstore Co., at a press conference held for last Friday's opening.

However, Zhang's company is not the only in town to implement this kind of pioneering business model. On the same day, Gold Elephant, one of the city's four biggest state-owned chain drugstores, opened a similar



A lion dance troupe performs for the launch of the new Tianhuide discount pharmacy near Huayuan Qiao.

Photo by Iceberg

supermarket-style drugstore at Liuli Qiao in Haidian District, the company's 218th branch.

Develche established Beijing's first discount drugstore, which sells medicines at average markdowns of 25 percent, in March 2002. Since then, the company has opened nine more discount pharmacies, forcing other local drug retailers, especially state-owned stores, to lower their prices.

Zhang revealed that another three Tianhuide supermarket-style drugstores are in the works. "With the opening of Beijing's drug retail market to foreign and domestic private capitals, it's crucial for local drug retailers to upgrade to more competitive business models," he said.

## Exhibition Center Seeks Profits from Auto Market Move

By Shan Jinliang

Last December's announcement by the management of the Beijing Asian Games Village Auto Market of plans to move the facility to Changping District this May has opened a potential gap in the local auto market.

Aimed at capitalizing on that move, an exhibition center located near the original Asian Games Village Auto Market announced its entry into the auto sales sector last Sunday.

Mr. Gao, a senior official with the Auto Square of China International Science and Technology Convention Center (CISTCC), which stands north of Madian Qiao told *Beijing Times* on Monday that the center's first and second floors would be devoted to auto shows, providing enough space to accommodate nearly 100 different car brands.

The center signed rental agreements with automakers late last year and the new Auto Square is slated to open this May, according to Gao, but the center's convention department told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday that work on the new project has yet to begin.

Gao explained that the business shift was intended to push the center into profitability, as the fierce competition between

local exhibition areas had left the CISTCC nearly unused for a long time.

He continued that the auto market seemed a perfect direction as auto sales continue to rocket in Beijing.

In a telephone interview with *Beijing Today* on Tuesday, Beijing Asian Games Auto Market General Manager Su Hui was not as optimistic about the center's prospects. "Good location does not necessarily translate to business success," he said. "For example the Wangfujing Auto Port (a downtown auto sales center) has not been very successful."

He also warned that the shift is risky because auto sales in Beijing are overheated, or unnaturally strong, and the market itself is not fully mature.

The Beijing Asian Games Auto Market, the leading auto sales center in the capital, was forced to relocate to a new site in Qijia Town, Changping to make room for a venue for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The new facility will be massive, nearly three times the size of the original. Su hoped improved services, including auto part sales, auto repairs, test drives and dining options could counter any negative fallout from the relocation.

## Seven-Eleven Coming to Capital

By Jill Ju

Competition in Beijing's convenience store sector is about to heat up now that giant Seven-Eleven is set to open its first outlet in the Dongzhimen area. "The first 7-11 convenience store in Beijing will be opened this spring," Seven-Eleven Beijing Corporation Deputy General Manager Li Yong told *Beijing Youth Daily* last week.

The US-based company operates the world's largest chain of convenience store. Seven-Eleven Beijing was granted approval to open local stores on December 22 last year and received its official license on January 2. The company is a joint venture of Seven-Eleven Japan, which holds a 65 percent stake, Beijing Capital Union Group, holder of a 25 percent share, and China Sugar and Wine Industry Group.

Li said his company plans to open 150 stores in Beijing, many of which will be open 24-hours-a-day. Seven-Eleven planned to enter the local market last year, but the approval and arrangement process took longer than expected, he added. Despite the chain's size and fame, its success is not guaranteed. An article in *Beijing Daily* last week commented that cold weather and short days could take real bites into convenience store sales during the winter.

Seven-Eleven entered the China market in Guangzhou and Shenzhen in 1992 and has since opened around 150 stores in those areas. However, the company opted not to expand its presence into Shanghai because it arrived later than rival chains.

## FedEx-DTW Opens Express Station

By Su Wei

On Sunday, FedEx-DTW, a joint venture logistic company set up by FedEx Express (FedEx) and DTW, announced the opening of its second express station in Beijing, located in the Beijing Economic and Technological Development Area at Yizhuang.

"The new express station will not only enhance FedEx's services in Beijing through shortening shipment delivery times, but also perfect the express delivery infrastructure in Yizhuang and upgrade the development zone's logistics distribution standard," said Eddy Chan, FedEx regional vice president, China.

The around 1,500-square-meter Yizhuang express station has 37 employees and 25 delivery vehicles, enough to cover all pick-up and distribution services in areas south of Chaoyang Lu. "With this new center at the core of logistics routes southeast of the Fifth Ring Road, development of express services in Tongzhou District, the Daxing Development Area and southern Beijing is certain to speed up soon," added Chan.

## Yahoo! and Sina Setting Up Auction Joint Venture

By Xiao Shan

Yahoo! and Sina, China's leading portal website, announced on Wednesday the signing of a definitive agreement to establish a joint venture to provide auction-based e-commerce services for small- and medium-sized businesses and individuals in China.

The move marks Sina's first venture into the online auction arena. The domestic portal announced in its statement that the new service would combine its leading brand and huge domestic client base with Yahoo!'s global recognition and proven e-commerce expertise gained from running successful auction services in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Through the joint venture, Yahoo! and Sina will create a comprehensive auction-based e-commerce platform and provide both fixed-price and bid-price sales models for consumer goods. The exact terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The new service will carry both brands and should be available to Chinese Internet users by mid-year.

Online auctions have boomed in China in recent years, highlighted by the purchase of leading domestic online auction company Eachnet last year by US-based Ebay for \$150 million.

## Sanyuan Launches Dairy Base in Hebei

By Tony Shaw

Beijing Saiyuan Food Corp. General Manager Guo Weijian announced last Saturday that his company would invest 30 million yuan to set up a major dairy production base in Qian'an, Hebei Province as a way to overcome milk shortages that plagued the company this September.

The new base is one part of the company's push to enlarge its presence in Beijing's market and nationwide since it was listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange in September last year.

Other domestic dairy giants including Bright, Yili and Mengniu have also established bases in Hebei.

The Qian'an dairy base, run by Hebei Qian'an Dairy Corp., was established with investment from Sanyuan Food and Austrian Sanyuan Trade Corp., and its daily production should be equal to 10 percent of total daily dairy production in Beijing.

Guo said milk shortages are a key problem in Sanyuan's road to success. Qian'an, 440 kilometers from Beijing, offers the twin advantage of massive milk supply and low costs, according to a report in *Shanghai Youth Daily* on January 8.

# World Bank Plans Yuan Bonds

Tokyo, January 11 (AFP) - The World Bank plans to issue yuan-denominated bonds to raise funds for development projects in China, the Japanese daily, *Yomiuri Shimbun* said.

The Bank has already begun talks with the government and the People's Bank of China with an aim to start issuing the bonds by December, the newspaper said.

If the plan is carried out, the World Bank will be the first international financial institution to issue such bonds in

China, it said.

Beijing has previously allowed neither international financial institutions nor foreign banks to issue yuan-denominated bonds in the country, the daily said.

The Washington-based global financial body is considering raising funds in China for spending on development projects, it said.

Under the plan, the yuan-based bonds will be issued through the International Finance Corporation, an arm of

the World Bank that promotes private sector investment in developing countries.

The funds will go to public projects in China and to private firms, as well as being used for technological assistance.

The bank is negotiating with China on the volume, timing and period for the bonds, which it wants to carry long maturities.

It has so far procured funds mainly in dollars for loans to large projects in China, such as railway construction.

If yuan-denominated bonds are issued, the risk from exchange rate fluctuations is lowered in the event the Chinese government revalues or floats its currency in the future.

## Analyst's Take:

Allowing the World Bank to issue yuan-denominated bonds in China will further the development of the bond market in this country, and will provide an opportunity for the renminbi to enter the international

financial market.

Issuing yuan-denominated bonds will lower the risk from exchange rate fluctuations for both China and the World Bank. Furthermore, China can use the opportunity to perfect its laws regulating domestic financial institutions and bank bonds. China is also likely to relax the terms on foreign institutions and banks' issuing bonds.

— *Xing Guanghua, analyst of the China International Finance Corporation*



Former Enron finance chief Andrew S. Fastow arrives at the federal courthouse Wednesday, January 14, 2004 in Houston. AP Photo

## Former Enron Exec Pleads Guilty

Houston, January 14 (AP) - Andrew Fastow, chief architect of the off-the-books deals that brought down Enron, pleaded guilty along with his wife Wednesday in a deal that could lead prosecutors to the top of the corporate ladder at the scandal-ridden company.

The former finance chief accepted his 10-year prison sentence and will help prosecutors build a case against the executives who once occupied the most opulent offices on the company's top floor: former chairman Kenneth Lay and former CEO Jeffrey Skilling.

The plea bargains represent the biggest breakthrough yet in the two-year investigation into a scandal that led to the energy giant's collapse and rocked Wall Street and Washington alike.

## Bush Plans 2015 Moon Landing

Washington, January 14 (AP) - President Bush, envisioning "new journeys to the worlds beyond our own," unveiled a plan on Wednesday to send astronauts to the moon, Mars and beyond on missions sure to cost hundreds of billions of dollars and stretch the bounds of technology. He called for a manned lunar landing as early as 2015.

Bush's election-year initiative represents the boldest space goals since John F. Kennedy laid the groundwork for the Apollo program that landed Americans on the moon in 1969.

## US, China to Lead Economic Recovery

United Nations, January 14 (AFP) - The United States and China are leading the way towards a 3.5 percent surge in world economic growth expected this year, the UN said.

After setbacks caused by the SARS crisis and the war on Iraq, national economies gathered steam in the second half of 2003 and that trend will continue in 2004, it said in an annual report.

"The world economy is gaining momentum," it said. "The global economic recovery is being driven mainly by the United States but increasing contributions from a number of other economies are becoming evident."

## US Tech Firms Improve in Patent Ranking

San Jose, California, January 12 (AP) - IBM Corp. received vastly more US patents than any other company last year, and three other American technology firms improved in an annual ranking of private sector patents by the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Six of the top 10 companies in the 2003 list were Asian, including divisions of Japanese consumer electronics giants Hitachi and Sony, and South Korea's Samsung, according to a report released Monday by the Department of Commerce agency. The four remaining companies were American.

IBM was No. 1 for the 11th consecutive year, with 70 percent more patents than No. 2 Canon. General Electric Co., which finished eighth in the 2002 rankings, didn't make the 2003 top 10 list.

## Morgan Stanley Fined

Paris, January 12 (Reuters) - A Paris court on Monday found US investment bank Morgan Stanley guilty of defaming global luxury leader LVMH in a landmark ruling which, if upheld, could change the face of investment research.

Following a 14-month legal battle, the Paris Commercial Court upheld allegations by LVMH that Morgan Stanley's equity research had been biased against it, and awarded 30 million euros (\$38.5 million) in compensation.

The five-judge tribunal under Judge Jean-Pierre Eck also appointed an "expert" to evaluate the extent of material damages against LVMH, which said it had evidence that could prove these damages would exceed 70 million euros.



# World's Largest Cruise Ship Sets Sail

London, January 13 (AP) - The world's largest cruise ship, Queen Mary 2, set sail for the United States on its maiden voyage, carrying 2,600 passengers who paid up to \$48,000 for the privilege.

The 150,000-ton Cunard Line vessel on Monday left the southern English port of Southampton on the

14-day journey to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, its first voyage with fare-paying passengers.

The new cruise liner took more than five years to build. It is 1,138 feet long and 238 feet high - as tall as a 21-story building. It will take over the trans-Atlantic duties of the Queen Elizabeth 2 ocean liner.

Its 2,600 passengers will have the run of six restaurants, five swimming pools, an art gallery and a movie theater that doubles as a planetarium.

Fares for Queen Mary 2's fully booked maiden voyage from Southampton to Fort Lauderdale, began at \$4,400 per person for 14 nights and rose to \$48,310.

## Bank of England Sued

January 13, (FT) - The Bank of England came under unprecedented legal attack on Tuesday over its role in one of the world's biggest banking frauds, as liquidators of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International launched an £850m claim for damages in London's Royal Court of Justice.

Lawyers for Deloitte & Touche, acting for BCCI creditors, told a packed courtroom they would "seek to demonstrate that over a considerable period of time the Bank of England deliberately ran away from seeking sufficient information about BCCI".

Gordon Pollock, QC, said the bank, and officials in its supervisory department, took a "first slippery step" when they agreed to license BCCI in 1980, in spite of doubts which had been raised about its management, founder and operations.

He said the bank then cold-shouldered the two "honourable options" of revoking that licence or taking over full supervision of BCCI, rather than relying on regulators in Luxembourg.

The bank hit back at the allegations, saying it believed the "highly implausible claim" was "not only misconceived but outrageous".

It said: "The claim defies common sense in several respects. It is self-evident nonsense to allege that when the bank granted BCCI SA a licence in June 1980, it knew, believed or suspected that a bank which survived for 11 years would probably collapse causing loss to depositors".

## Media Report:

This is the first time the Bank of England has had to defend itself in London's high court. No one has ever successfully sued the Bank of England in the past. It seems the Bank of England has statutory immunity against claims of negligence. So it will be a long, hard battle for Deloitte & Touche to push the bank to penitence.

The lawsuit is not only about money. The scandal may drag down some British authorities, and could damage the reputation of the British government.

— *Xinwen Wanbao*

## Korean Bodyguards Head for Iraq



January 11, (The Korea Times) - A South Korean security service firm will send 100 bodyguards to Iraq to carry out security missions for international businesses in the war-torn country.

Following their dispatch of five bodyguards to Jordan last month to protect the country's royal

family, the New Korea Total Service (NKTS), a private security service provider, on Sunday announced it will dispatch 50 bodyguards this month and another 50 next month to establish a branch office in Iraq.

The 100 bodyguards will execute security-related missions such as escorting foreign businessmen and providing security surveillance services, according to Chang Jin-suk, an official in charge of business operations at the NKTS.

"All of those to be dispatched to Iraq are former members of the Special Warfare Command and they have been training for anti-terrorist missions for the past five months in Kapyong (Kyonggi Province)," Chang said in an interview.

The South Korean bodyguards will be heavily armed with pistols, rifles and machine guns, according to Chang. The company is working to obtain a permit from the provisional government of Iraq to conduct business and to arm their bodyguards.

## SK Chairman Jailed

Seoul, January 10 (AFP) - The chairman of South Korea's third largest conglomerate, SK Group, has been jailed on charges of allegedly syphoning off one billion dollars from a group unit, prosecutors said.

Son Kil-Seung, who also served as the head of the influential Federation of Korean Industries, a lobbying arm of the country's conglomerates, was jailed late Friday. His first appeal hearing is expected within a few months.

Son, 62, was charged with drawing 788 billion won (US\$666 million) from SK Shipping without permission from the board of directors between April 1998 and August 2002 and having it invested in overseas futures.

He was also charged with illegally diverting another 249 billion won from SK Shipping and funnelling it into an SK Group unit in 1998, according to the Prosecutor General's Office.

## Analyst's Take:

Many large corporations in South Korea are family-oriented and they maintain close ties with

the government. Corporations' excessive reliance on banks is considered to be another major cause for the recent financial crisis in South Korea.

Furthermore, internal dealings between companies are common practice in a large family-oriented corporation. As a result, some large shareholders often pursue their own interests by using their privileged power in the corporation, and consequently cause financial losses for other shareholders.

— *Wang Zheng, researcher of the Asian Department, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*

## Media Report:

Since the beginning of the new year, the judicial organs in South Korea have been taking strong measures in fighting corruption, and have arrested or jailed a few parliament members and chiefs of some large corporations.

Six South Korean parliament members were arrested in the early morning of January 10. The six parliament members are from various parties and they were charged with accepting illegal political funding and bribes. Another two parliament members were issued with summons to appear in a hearing at a later time.

— *Xu Zhijian, Legal Daily*



Bank of England in London

# Masses Homeward Bound

By Wang Xiaoxiao

With the holiday around the corner, planes, trains and automobiles around the nation are filled to the gills, a condition only exacerbated in the capital by last Sunday's unexpected snow.

This year's arrival of Spring Festival two weeks earlier than normal means that students on winter break and migrant workers will all be heading home at the same time. According to the Ministry of Railways, the rush on mass

transportation started on January 7 and should last for about 40 days. More than six million people are expected to travel through Beijing during the festival season, according to the Beijing Railway Bureau. In spite of the 238 new tickets windows at local railway stations, it is still pretty difficult to buy a ticket.

After standing in line for two hours in the light snow and biting wind last Sunday morning, Zheng Guangshu, a 34-year-old migrant worker from Anhui

Province, learned that all train tickets for Wednesday were sold out and he would have to wait another 12 hours for tickets set to go on sale at midnight.

Yang Xinli, who works in Shunyi District, told Xinhua on January 11, "I work as a tea server at a pool hall and have to stand for 12 to 13 hours a day. Standing in line for a train ticket was really tiring." When he finally got to the ticket window after queuing for over one hour, he was told he

could only get a standing room ticket. He decided to hold off on the purchase. "I've been standing for a whole year. This time, I want to go back home sitting on a seat," he explained.

A major factor behind the tightness of train tickets is the proliferation of black market seat sales, despite the fact that the prices of illegally purchased tickets are regularly inflated by hundreds of yuan and local police crack down hard on scalpers.



## Festival Celebrates Plum Blossoms

By Ju Ming

The 2004 Beijing Plum Blossom Festival opened yesterday in the Tulip Garden on Dongwei Lu in Chaoyang District. The event is the largest plum exhibition in Beijing and involves nearly 2,000 plum trees of 109 varieties.

After hosting the city's first plum blossom festival last year, the Tulip Garden has emerged as a center for flowering

plum tree cultivation and new and exciting things are in store for this year's event. Two of the trees on show are over 300 years old.

Aside from the beauty of the blossoms themselves, the garden has been landscaped exquisitely, with flowing water, a small bridge, a wooden hut and dramatically-shaped rocks adding to the feel of tranquility and peace.

Photo by Cui Jun

## Citizens Come to Aid of Beggar Girl

By Dong Nan

By getting a handicapped girl away from begging on the streets of Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, some warm-hearted citizens of that city actually managed to save her life last week.

Since last November, the girl had begged from an overpass in the Xinshi area of Guangzhou's Baiyun District. Her legs were blackened, too thin to support her weight, and covered in lesions and wounds. Someone was clearly delivering her to the overpass every morning and then taking her away in the evenings.

One man, surnamed Liu, noticed that the condition of the girl's legs was growing worse by the day. He figured that there had to be someone away from the scene exploiting the girl as an effective way of making money.

On January 2, Liu carried the girl from the overpass and took her to see a doctor. He then sent her to the home of some family friends, where a Mr. Lin and his wife took care of the girl and tried to talk to her. Eventually, she opened up and told them about her experiences.

Her name is Gong Xuanxuan and she was bought from her family in Fuyang, Anhui Province, by a man nicknamed "Three Teeth," who forced her to beg. He also inflicted many of the wounds on her legs and body.

Later, Gong told the Guangzhou-based *Information Times* that on good days she could earn around 100 yuan. When she did not take in that much, "Three Teeth" beat her badly. Gong also revealed that "Three Teeth" had two boys begging for him on the city streets.

Doctors at the Guangzhou Youhao Hospital conducted thorough examinations of Gong's health and told the *Information Times* her handicap was the result of a disease affecting her spinal cord. The hospital announced that treating the girl would cost around 100,000 yuan.

Liu and Lin, both of whom have refused to publicize their full names since domestic media picked up the story, are in their 30s and regular businessmen. They told the *Information Times* that they planned to open an orphanage to help more children forced to be beggars.

"Many people are willing to help others, but simply giving child beggars money is not a solution. We are trying to gather strength from the people to help more children like Gong Xuanxuan," said Liu.

A reporter from the *Information Times* went to Gong's hometown and discovered several people there involved in the trade of children for begging. Fuyang police have subsequently begun an investigation into the matter.



Photo by Xiao Jiapa

## Let the Fish Go Free

By Ma Jianfei

Nearly 41,000 artificially bred young Chinese sturgeon were released into the Yangtze River near Shashi, Hubei Province last Thursday morning in what was the largest release of the fish in the past five years in that area.

The Chinese sturgeon species has been on the earth for approximately 140 million years, making it one of the oldest known surviving vertebrates.

According to Wei Qiwei, a researcher at the Yangtze River Fisheries Research Institute under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, all the sturgeon released this time were about two months young and 10 to 15 centimeters in length.

Scientists inserted tiny digital chips two millimeters long and one millimeter wide into the bodies of each fish in order to research their patterns of movement and life cycle. Since 1998, the institute has released about 210,000 immature Chinese sturgeon into the Yangtze.

## Heading Out on New Year's Eve

By Yu Shanshan

Though most people in the capital still like to spend their New Year's Eve in traditional style, meaning at home with the family, making dumpling and watching CCTV's Spring Festival programs, increasing numbers of Beijingers are being lured by convenience and fun to dine out.

As the Year of the Monkey nears, popular restaurant chains such as Quanjude, Caigexiang, Huatian and Meizhou Dongpo are busily handling calls to their New Year's Eve dinner reservation hotlines, while managers of other restaurants and hotels are implementing all kinds of creative ideas for attracting diners.

The Beijing Hotel has met surprisingly positive response to a new policy of allowing customers to bring their own booze on New Year's Eve. "We have booked more than 100 reservations," Tian Yu from the hotel's marketing department told Beijing Youth Daily on Monday.

Discounts and gifts are common draws put to use at many establishment, including the Beijing Yunlingzhichun Restaurant and outlets of the Taoranjia chain. Every family that dines at Taoranjia will receive one free bottle of prized Maotai brand liquor and qualify to take part in a lucky prize in which everyone will take home something.

Even five-star hotels are joining the fray, hoping to attract customers with discount rates on rooms and special stay packages. For example, the Shangri-la hotel has cut the price for a standard double room from US\$200 to just 688 yuan.

## Hot Line Set Up to Help Kids of Single Parents

By Zhang Ran

The capital's first hotline aimed at addressing the needs of children of single parent families went into operation last Thursday at the number 6235 6688.

The hotline is staffed by more than 30 volunteers, who range in age from 19 to 70 years old. "I want to help people who have had similar problems to me," said Guanxin (pseudonym), a law student, child of a single parent family and the youngest of the volunteer counselors.

Gao Yujing, the creator of the hotline, has devoted herself to a career as a professional counselor for single-parent kids over the past eight years.

"We need more jurisprudent volunteers," she said. Gao

started down her current path after serving as the attorney in a murder case in 1995 in which a boy killed his father after his parents divorced. She was convinced that the fracturing of the family spoiled the young man's heart and led to the tragedy.

The hotline's first call came from a 15-year-old boy whose parents divorced two years ago. "I will talk with the boy in person, because there is a lot we have to do before he will really feel better," Gao said.

According to the *Beijing Evening News*, incomplete statistics indicate that there are at least 10 million children living in single parent families in China and that number increases by 500,000 each year.

## 'Yellow Teeth' Village to Get Potable Water

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The people of remote Hujiaying Village in Yanqing County will receive potable water for the first time in memory just before Spring Festival. As *Beijing Today* first reported on November 28, they have long suffered as a result of the over-flouridation of local groundwater, a problem that has led to widespread severe dental problems and other complications.

The good news came on the heels of many media reports on the village's plight that led to donations pouring in from around the country as people hoped to help the residents of Hujiaying.

Last Sunday, a team from the Beijing Geological Research and Reconnaissance Institute finished the final

steps in drilling a new well for the village. Subsequent tests of that well's water showed it had a fluoride content well within the range of government limits.

According to team leader Zhu Yongjun, the drills ran day and night for around half a month so that residents could get access to good water as quickly as possible.

Cai Qiaosheng, a senior geological engineer from the Beijing Institute of Geosciences Engineering, said the well was 85 meters deep and the temperature of its water was 14.5°C. After final checks are completed by the expert team, the laying of the pipeline system will begin and the people of Hujiaying should be drinking fresh, healthy water as they ring in the Year of the Monkey.

## Eyes of the Tiger

By Zhang Ran

Guests at the Hangzhou Wild Animal Zoo in Zhejiang Province have fallen in love with a very rare four-eyed tiger – a young cat that has whimsically been wearing a pair of glasses since January 8.

Lulu, a Northeastern tiger raised at the zoo, was born with serious cataracts. After undergoing surgery to remove the cataracts last December 20 at the Zhejiang No. 2 Hospital, she developed farsightedness.

To help her see clearer, the Hangzhou Maoyuanchang Glasses Shop was commissioned to forge a special pair of glasses for the tiger.

The unusual specs cover 300 degrees and use a frame from a pair of swimming goggles that has been molded to fit Lulu's face.

The glasses have not worked as well as hoped because they easily fog up, though the makers plan to solve that problem by simply drilling two small holes in the lenses.



Lulu's special glasses were crafted from swimming goggles.

Photo by Liang Zhen

## Park Launches Chunjie Carnie

By Liu Jing

Parades, displays of model dinosaurs and performing clowns will create a festive environment at Beijing Amusement Park's huge carnival to celebrate Chinese New Year from January 21 to 28.

The whole park will be filled with over 1,00 cartoon art works, most based on beloved children's tales from China and abroad, such as

*Journey to the West* and *Snow White*.

A grand opening ceremony will be held Wednesday morning, and every day from October 1 to 7 parades of domestic and foreign performers decked out as cartoon characters will wind through the park.

Entrance tickets cost 80 yuan each and grant access to more than 25 entertainment venues in the park.



Coach Cai Zhenhua

## Moral Bank Largely Ignored

By Zhang Ran

Zhejiang Industry University is starting to wonder whether opening a "moral bank" was such a great idea after all. The aim was to offer various rewards for good deeds, but the bank's "president" He Xingzhou admitted that not too many people have shown any interest.

A campus campaign named "moral bank" was launched at Zhijiang College, Zhejiang Industry University on November 5th, 2003.

Every freshman received a fancy blue card which they could use to record their various good deeds and claim rewards for them. The rewards include being given priority when applying for part-time jobs on campus or various training programs, an opportunity to receive free tickets for various contests and lectures and getting free newspapers and magazines.

So how come no-one's interested? The moral campaign even triggered off a dispute about whether it was moral itself. Opinions follow:

**He Xingzhou, president of the moral bank**

We use the title moral bank because it sounds attractive. People who have done good deeds should get rewarded. The idea is to try and turn moral ideas into action. So far, the good deeds we've registered were mainly some voluntary activities organized and conducted collectively by classes or departments. Individual students don't seem to be so interested. Maybe some students have done good deeds but were too shy to claim a reward.

**Chen Shaofeng, professor of Ethics, Peking University.**

The so-called moral bank is not an inspiration for moral behavior, but a market.

No wonder there are so few students who have come to the "bank" to claim a reward; they have not lost their moral sense. This is a misuse of the word moral. Moral means fulfillment of social responsibility and assisting others without expecting a reward. Moral behavior is not some kind of deposit that can be lent or exchanged. The campaign launched by Zhejiang Industry University is itself immoral. It just stores what the students have done and pays them back later. It could have a bad effect as it could distract people from genuinely moral behavior.

**He Jie, editor of CCTV**

Morals can not be balanced by money. If you just do good deeds for the sake of a reward, morals are not morals any more.

**Wei Chaoxian, professor of education at Zhejiang University**

Systems are more powerful than morals and any noble behavior and spirit, without being guaranteed institutionally, is short-lived. The moral bank is a good way to try and systematically guarantee moral behavior.

**Zheng Danyang, bank clerk of CIBC**

What are morals? The only just criterion is whether it is beneficial for society. Maybe the system is not perfect, but it can be improved in practice.

**Lin Sen, a student from Peking University**

The idea of a moral bank is an absurdity. Morals and markets are totally different systems. A perfect market has little to do with morality. However, moral behavior is based on inspiration. One noble act of behavior can inspire another. The idea of combining the two things is ridiculous.

# Keep Your Eyes on the Ball

By Wang Xiaoxiao

China has always taken considerable pride in its mighty table tennis teams so it caused quite a stir when four players were expelled from the national team and sent home in disgrace. Their sin? They had fallen in love.

On January 2, chief coach Cai Zhenhua, announced that the players had been influenced by love and thus couldn't concentrate on their training. The players were Bai Yang, 19, reportedly the girlfriend of men's world No. 1 Ma Lin, and 17-year-old Fan Ying who is apparently in a relationship with ITTF Pro Tour Finals winner Wang Hao. World No. 9 Li Nan, 21, and her boyfriend Hou Yingchao, 21, were also dismissed. However, Ma Lin and Wang Hao were allowed to remain. The coach said their training had not been so badly affected. Besides, they're China's best players and the team really needs them.

It came as a surprise to Coach Cai when his decision was greeted with nationwide derision and argument. Complaints flooded the nation's press the very next day. The media focused on the perceived injustice of Ma and Wang being allowed to stay in the team. A theme of human rights was even brought up. Do the players not have the right to fall in love?

Because the state team has already begun intensive training in preparation for the Olympics, their opinions are collected mainly from local newspapers.

**Voices from the national team:**

Cai Zhenhua, chief coach

Cai Zhenhua told *Jiang Huai Morning News* that the conflict between emotions and career had long been a problem in team management. Although love can help lighten the pressure for team members, it also affects the training situation and the state of mind during the matches, he said. "We made such a decision not just for these four members but also as a warning to the whole team. The punishment might be a little too much for them but in comparison to the team and national honor, it is nothing. We hope that the dismissed members can realize and correct their mistakes in time and finally return to our team." When asked why Ma and Wang were still in the team, Cai Zhenhua said he had to make a choice for the good of the team.

Lu Yuansheng, coach of the women's team

"The team has actually considered making this kind of decision for a long time and has just been waiting for the right time," Lu Yuansheng told *Xin Min Evening News*. "To dismiss the four members is a special management method of the team in this special year with the Olympics coming up. Whether the China team can get good results has a lot to do with daily management."

Jin Lufang, Fan Ying's former coach in the Jiangsu women's team

*Hai Xia Dushi Bao* quoted Jin Lufang as saying she understood the move and that she hoped it would help Fan Ying understand her current problems and return to the state team as early as possible. She said even members of the Jiangsu province team were not allowed to have boyfriends or girlfriends. Jin felt it was a straight choice between emotions and a career as an athlete.

Bai Yang  
"I knew this day might come even before the decision was announced because the team doesn't allow this kind of thing. I totally



①



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③



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understand the decision; the national interest comes first," said Bai Yang in an article in *Oriental Sports Daily*.

**Voices from the public:**

Sun Shen, a student basketball player in Renmin University

I know in a professional team it is a very strict rule that athletes can't have partners, especially in their own team. My mum and my dad are an example. They were both professional basketball players and had to be separated into different teams after they fell in love. I have a boyfriend in the university men's basketball team but my coach has reminded me that I mustn't allow it to affect me. You can't judge whether it's human or cruel because it's been accepted in the sport field for so long.

Yin Pei, a clerk working for a foreign company

I feel sorry to hear that our

athletes can't have partners. It's inhuman to forbid them from being in love. But maybe the coaches are right and it isn't good for their training or ability in competitions. But I have to say that I respect our athletes. They have sacrificed so much and are heroes for our country.

Horia, a Romanian working for SC Sinorom Tipografie

I think the punishment is not fair. If under some special circumstances you can punish those who are in love, then all those in love should be punished. So why are Ma Lin and Wang Hao still in the team?

Yu Yang, Xin Yuan Chen Trade Company Ltd.

I don't think it's simply a matter of dismissing some members. Perhaps there's some other reason behind it? But that is of course just my guess. The Chinese sports system is not so human and sometimes

the coaches are very dictatorial. You just have to follow everything they say without any objections. Why do so many good athletes go abroad and seek a better career?

**Profiles of the team members:**

① **Bai Yang**, born on June 13, 1984, was the ladies' doubles runner-up in the 2003 Croatia Open and mixed doubles runner-up in the 2003 World Table Tennis championships.

② **Ma Lin**, born on February 19, 1980, was the men's singles and doubles champion in the 2002 American and German Open, men's singles champion at the 2002 Poland and Denmark Open and men's doubles champion at the 2002 Holland Open. He was also the men's champion in the Asian Games in 2002 and mixed doubles champion in the 2003 World Table Tennis Championships.

③ **Wang Hao**, born on December 1, 1983, was the men's singles champion in the 2003 Croatia Open, men's singles champion and member of the winning men's team in the 2003 Asian Championships and men's doubles runner-up in the 2003 World Table Tennis Championships.

④ **Fan Ying**, born on February 12, 1986, was the ladies' doubles champion in the 2002 Austria Open.

⑤ **Li Nan**, born on June 17, 1982, was a member of the winning ladies' team and ladies' singles runner-up in the 2003 Asian Championships.

⑥ **Hou Yingchao**, born on June 15, 1982, was a member of the winning men's team in the 2003 Asian championships.

By Dong Nan

A physical and psychological survey of private car owners conducted last month by Qianfu Healthcare Center and *Beijing Star Daily* turned up some unnerving results. Most drivers suffered varying degrees of mental or physical problems, which could well affect their safety and that of other road users.

One hundred private car owners were involved in the survey. Most of them were "white collar" workers, involved in technical fields or management staff. Their ages ranged from 20 to 58, and on average they had been driving for eight years.

Mental problems

Only 36.1% of the participants were found to be free from any noticeable mental problems. 30.9% were found to be suffering as many as five psychological problems, and the rest showed signs of six to ten different conditions.

These mental problems include somatization (physical complaints brought on by psychological problems), obsessive-compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoia, psychoticism and other problems relating to sleeping and eating.

Liu Ping, director of the Nursing Department of Qianfu Healthcare Center, told *Beijing Today* that it was common for people to have several mental problems; but if there are more than six it's a cause for concern. However, she pointed out that the symptoms among participants in the survey were not too serious.

The most common problems were obsessive-compulsive disorder (found in 53.6%), hostility (52.6%), somatization (45.4%), paranoia (39.2%), interpersonal sensitivity (38.1%), and depression (35.1%).

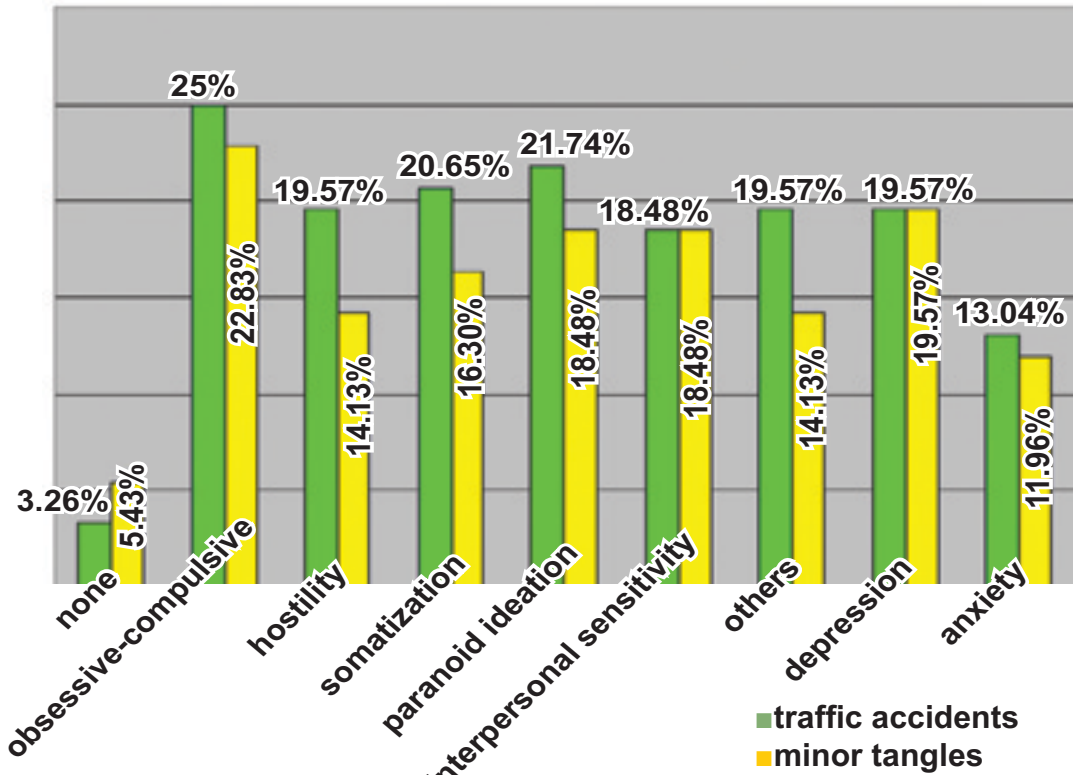
In the survey, 35 people admitted to having been involved in traffic accidents, while 32 said they had been involved in minor tangles.

The participants filled in a form about their attitude to driving. The results showed that 68.7% were "unwilling to stop the car when the light turns yellow"; half of them "can't keep patient in traffic jams"; 48% "won't give way to aggressive drivers"; and 18.5% admitted that they resented having to avoid pedestrians and non-motor vehicles.

"Certainly I will not stop my car when the light turns yellow," said Yin Shiyang, a private car owner in her thirties. "Since the traffic jam is always so bad, if I have to wait for the next green light,

# Get Outta My Way!

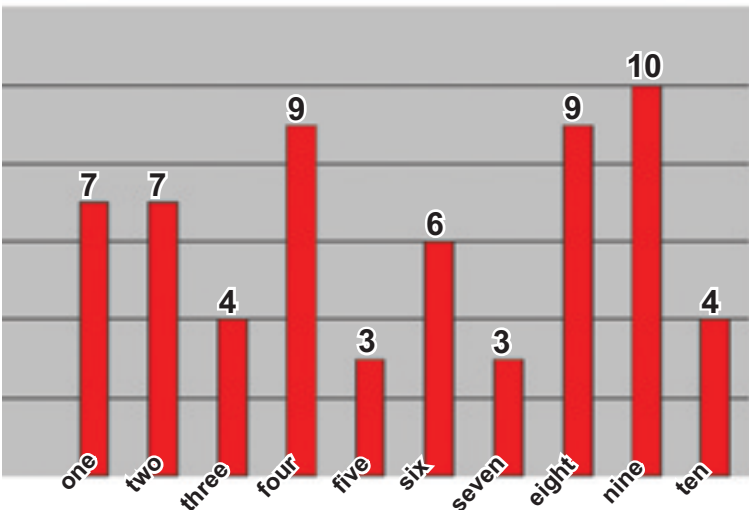
## Mental problems suffered by people involved in accidents



time will be wasted. Sometimes, if the driver in front of me stops for the yellow light, I will feel angry."

"There are many different reasons why drivers have these mental problems," said Liu Ping. "Of course, traffic jams should to be blamed, but pressure from work and family should not be ignored. What's more, we find that the mental problems are most concentrated in people aged 30 to 39," said Liu. "This group are the main earners in society and have to take more responsibilities. It seems they have more problems than people of other ages."

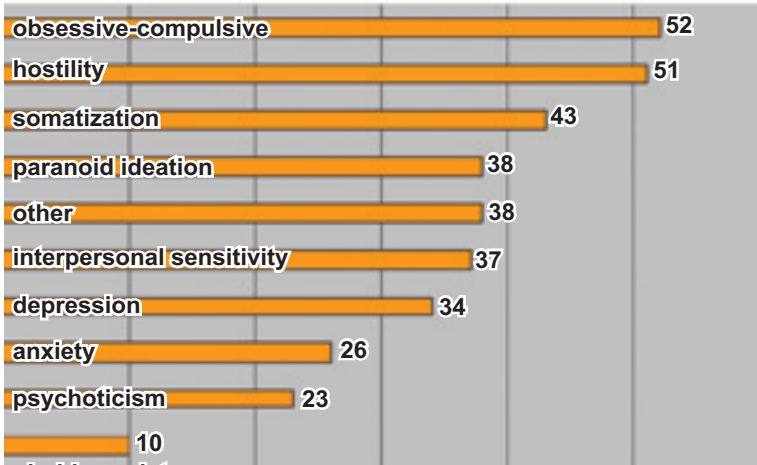
## How many kinds of mental problems do drivers have?



## How many people have abnormal psychology?

(age)	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
normal	2	6	12	2
somatization	9	19	10	6
obsessive-compulsive	13	20	12	7
interpersonal sensitivity	9	18	5	5
depression	7	16	8	3
anxiety	7	14	3	2
hostility	12	20	13	6
phobic anxiety	2	6	1	1
paranoid ideation	10	15	9	4
psychoticism	4	12	5	2
others	8	16	8	2

## What are the most common problems?



(based on the number of respondents who had the disorders)

### Bad habits

Among the 62 people who were willing to fill out the "sports and exercise" section, nearly one half said they never or seldom do any exercise. Among the 50 who filled out the smoking habits section, 70% said they were smokers. Of the 51 who filled out the drinking habits section, one third said they drank every day.

"I admit that I seldom take exercise," said Yin Shiyang. Sometimes I try to do some to keep my weight down, but I can never stick to it. But I don't smoke or drink alcohol. And if I am too busy to get enough sleep, I will make up for it at the weekend."

Ninety-two people participated in the physical examination. The top three problems were weight (54.3% were overweight), sight problems (43.5%) and fatty liver (37%).

Han Jiuru, doctor of the Service Department of Qianfu Healthcare Center said that though the general health of the participants was fine, the problems should not be ignored. The main reason was that although the living standards of the car owners were reasonably high, their eating habits were not so healthy and many of them did not get enough exercise. Another problem is that they spent so much time in the car where the air is stale. This is bad for the brain and can cause problems like dizziness.

Han said that though there was no direct evidence showing that driving can damage one's

eyesight, the fact that so many drivers have eye problems is a significant concern from the point of view of traffic safety.

### Suggestions

Liu Ping said there were two ways to deal with the mental problems found in the survey: dealing with them by confronting them oneself, or seeking help from doctors.

"Above all, people should try to learn how to adjust their mood by themselves, especially people who have a lot of pressure and responsibilities. They should try to change the way they think when facing troubles, or transfer their attention to other things temporarily," said Liu. "Trivial things like deep breathing and listening to music can also be very helpful."

If "self-help" fails, Liu advises seeking professional help. She pointed out that many private car owners are bosses or high-ranking officials and these kinds of people are often unwilling to reveal any problems they might have. But sometimes a doctor is needed. If necessary, doctors can prescribe medicines to control or alleviate the condition.

As to the physical problems, Liu suggested that private car owners should pay more attention to exercise, a healthy diet and living habits. She stressed that as social intercourse is a common part of white collar workers' lives, a healthy approach is all the more important.

Sources: Qianfu Healthcare Center and *Beijing Star Daily*

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Dai Yiquan sits in front of a picture of his wife.

Xinhua Photos



The BMW driven by Su Xiuwen didn't stop until it hit a tree by the roadside.  
Photo by Photocom

# An Accident or Murder?

By Sun Ming

A court verdict following a traffic accident in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, has attracted intense public scrutiny from all over the country in the past few weeks.

Su Xiuwen, 45, killed one person and injured 12 others when she drove a BMW into a crowd in Harbin in October last year. A tractor, driven by the dead victim and her husband, had scratched the wing mirror of Su's car. Su got out to beat and scold the couple. She then got back into her car and drove into them. She claimed it was an accident, but many people suspect it was a simple case of road rage, and then murder.

However, on December 20 last year, the Harbin Daoli District People's Court decided that it was an accident caused by Su's failure to control the car properly, instead of an intentional crime. Su was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with a three-year reprieve. She didn't appeal.

The verdict sparked outrage and a rumor started to circulate that Su was related to a high-ranking official in Heilongjiang Province. People took to the Internet to express their opinion that Su's sentence was lenient thanks to her wealth and connections.

## Run over

In the morning of October 16 last year, Dai Yiquan, 46, and his

wife Liu Zhongxia, 45, were driving a tractor carrying green onions to a market in downtown Harbin. When they passed a labor market in the city, in avoiding an oncoming car their tractor scraped a BMW which had stopped by the roadside. One of the ropes tying the onions got tangled on the wing mirror of the BMW, so the tractor dragged the car forward by about 1.5 meters.

According to the indictment, Su Xiuwen, 45, the driver of the BMW, and her elder sister Su Xiuqin, got out of the car and used their handbags to hit Dai and Liu, even though Liu kept apologizing. Persuaded by surrounding people, Su and her elder sister stopped and got back in the car several minutes later.

But then an unexpected tragedy occurred. "The BMW driven by Su suddenly hurtled towards Liu who was standing in front of the vehicle and ran her over. The car didn't stop. Su continued to drive forward for about ten meters, hitting 12 other people. The car came to a stop when it hit a tree by the roadside. Liu died on the spot," reads the indictment.

## Deliberate?

Su was detained by Harbin police two days after the incident. The case aroused strong indignation among local people in Harbin. Most thought that Su had deliberately run Liu over because of her rage.

Dai Qingjiang, the nephew of Dai Yiquan, said that a witness had told him that Su threatened to kill Liu before getting into the car, *Heilongjiang Daily* reported on October 18 last year. However, the witness did not come forward to say this in court.

Harbin Daoli District People's Court opened the hearing into the case on December 20. Su and her lawyers insisted that Su made a mistake by stepping on the accelerator instead of the brake pedal. "I didn't plan to kill her. I will never drive a car again," Su said in court. "I was really flustered. I wanted to reverse, but the car moved forwards. So I tried to hit the brake pedal, but I stepped on the accelerator instead." A verdict of accidental death was announced later that day.

The court decided it was a traffic accident rather than an intentional crime. But the verdict aroused controversy.

"It's completely incredible," Wang Qi, a lawyer told *Shenyang Today* after the hearing. Wang said he believed that Su intentionally ran Liu over. "The brake pedal of the BMW is much wider than the accelerator. I do not think a driver would be unable to tell the difference."

The Traffic Police Department of Harbin Public Security Bureau said it believed that Su caused the accident by mistake. "It's possible for her to hit the wrong pedal when she was so rattled. After investigation, we found that Su is not so good at driving and not familiar with the BMW which belonged to her husband's company," *Shenyang Today* quoted a policeman as saying last Monday.

Su's husband Guan Mingbo admitted to police that he helped his wife get a driving license through bribery in 1997. Su had learned to drive from her 22-year-old daughter last year.

"I'm truly repentant, even though I really did not intend to cause the accident," Su told *Xinhua News* last Thursday. "I am a victim as well. I can't go anywhere now," she said.

## Corruption?

Just days after the accident, a rumor that Su was the relative of some high-ranking official in Heilongjiang Province began to spread rapidly on the Internet.

The Traffic Police Department of Harbin Daoli District Police Station, Han Guizhi, the chairman of Heilongjiang Provincial Political Consultative Conference, and Ma Shujie, the deputy chairman all denied that Su had



Su Xiuwen



Guan Mingbo

any connection to them.

"Some indignant people still insist that the verdict was the result of legal corruption. A BMW is a symbol of wealth in this country," said *Southern Weekend* last Friday.

"People should take responsibility for what they said," Guan Mingbo, Su's husband, told *Xinhua News* on Sunday. "Many netizens' comments have no basis at all." At the same time, Guan said that he felt very sorry for what had happened. "After the traffic accident, I contacted Dai and the family members of the people injured. I tried my best to provide compensation."

## No witnesses

No witnesses were willing to come forward. Liu's husband Dai Yiquan didn't even bring a lawsuit against Su. It was Harbin Procuratorate which brought a public prosecution against Su on October 27 last year.

Dai refused to accept any interviews from the media until last Thursday. "It might be a poem spreading on the Internet that really touched Dai. The poem expressed the author's deep commiseration to Liu," *Shenyang Today* reported last Friday.

Dai told the newspaper that Su's husband Guan Mingbo had paid him more than 90,000 yuan (US\$11,000) in compensation and the other 12 injured people were paid about 180,000 yuan (US\$22,000) in total.

"Some rumors said that I accepted one million yuan from Guan, and that that's why I gave up bringing a lawsuit against his wife. It's not true. It was because I couldn't find anyone willing to testify. I really don't understand why no one promised to provide testimony in court," said Dai.

Dai told the newspaper that Guan had often visited his family after the traffic accident. "We're virtually friends now," said Dai. "Anyway, my kids and I still have to live in the world."

Dai's daughter Dai Jie, 16, accepted an interview from *Wenzhou News*, a website in Zhejiang Province, last Wednesday. "I don't want to think about the case any more. I don't care whether Su gets one year or 10 years in prison. It is not important at all since my mum is not here."

"My mother was 45 years old when she was killed and Su Xiuwen is 45 years old as well. But their fate is different. Su drives an expensive BMW and my mother now can't even sell onions," said the daughter.

A new investigation into the case is now underway. The press office of Harbin Municipal Government said on Saturday that the political and law department of Harbin has begun looking into Su's case.

By Xiao Rong

In the name of consumer rights, a retired worker from Chongqing municipality is taking on Duracell China for indicating that its disposable alkaline batteries shouldn't be recharged.

"We tried recharging a pair of Duracell alkaline batteries instead of just throwing them away as usual and it turned out to be okay," Ye Guang, an assistant to the plaintiff Chen Rui, told *Beijing Today*. "The warnings on the Duracell packaging, and on most other batteries, are violating the consumer's right to know and merely encouraging further battery consumption to boost their sales."

The lawsuit is probably the first of its kind in China, even though there have been previous cases related to battery safety problems.

Yuzhong District Court in Chongqing Municipality announced that the hearing will be held next month.

## "Misleading" warning?

After buying two LR6 Duracell alkaline batteries last May, Chen Rui saw the warning "Do not recharge, connect improperly or dispose of in fire in order to prevent possible risk of leakage or explosion." So he was surprised to find several kinds of chargers in local markets claiming to apply to LR6 alkaline batteries.

He then consulted a recent copy of the Modern Electrical Engineering Guidebook published by Guangdong Science and Technology Publishing House, which said that the LR6 alkaline battery can be recharged between 30 and 45 times.

Chen bought a charger and tried recharging some used-up Duracell LR6 alkaline batteries. They worked fine afterwards.

"At first I suspected that Chen Rui wanted to speak up for charger manufacturers when he first came to seek help from me. But

# Rechargeable or Not?

## Chongqing consumer sues Duracell

later I found the case might be helpful to reduce battery costs for consumers," said Ye Guang, who agreed to help Chen investigate the case free of charge.

Ye, a well-known local counterfeit investigator in Chongqing, regards the lawsuit as important for public welfare. He bought five to six brands of alkaline batteries in local markets and found they all had similar warnings to the one on Duracell battery packages. So he looked up the state regulations on alkaline batteries. Ye says he failed to find any requirement that manufacturers should warn against recharging alkaline batteries.

"How can battery producers offer such misleading warnings, unless just for the obvious reason that it increases sales? Battery producers should indicate specifically the probability of risks, like explosions or leakages, so that consumers themselves can decide for themselves whether to try recharging the batteries."

Ye also points out the massive benefit to environmental protection that could be achieved if people didn't simply throw out their batteries when they were used up.

## Commonly accepted

Yang Guosheng, acting lawyer for Duracell China, told *Beijing Today* that he had been ordered not to accept any interviews from the media by the company headquarters in the US.

*Beijing Today* contacted Shu Hai, from the law affairs department of Gillette Co., the parent company of Duracell. "We are a company that is highly responsible towards consumers and we

always obey relevant laws and regulations in China," he said, stressing that the warning not to recharge alkaline batteries is used on Duracell products worldwide.

Shu confirmed to *Beijing Today* that Duracell had presented evidence to the court last Wednesday, including a letter from the China Battery Industry Association claiming that indeed alkaline Zinc Manganese batteries should not be recharged.

Cao Guoqing, vice secretary-general of the China Battery Industry Association, admitted that the association had presented evidence to the court as to the non-rechargeable nature of alkaline batteries.

"Disposable alkaline batteries are totally different from rechargeable batteries in terms of structure and safety, so they cannot be recharged. This is commonly accepted in the industry worldwide," he said.

Cao cited several examples of explosions in recent years due to the misuse of alkaline batteries by consumers. His association has been helping several battery manufacturers in handling complaints and lawsuits in which consumers claimed compensation.

"It's really unfair for battery producers. They have been required by state and industry standards to give public warnings that alkaline batteries should not be recharged. But facing battery injury accusations, they still have to pay compensation. There is a great need to educate Chinese consumers about battery use," Cao says.

## Priorities

The reason there are no requirements in the state regu-

lation on alkaline batteries for warnings against recharging alkaline batteries is because the regulation is aimed at battery performance rather than safety, according to Wang Jinliang, vice director of the China Light Industry Institute of Electrochemical Power Sources.

Wang told *Beijing Today* that a new battery safety requirement will take effect this February. "The requirement does warn that alkaline batteries should not be recharged and all cell producers are required to make such warnings on their packaging," he said.

However, Ye Guang believes he is standing up for consumer rights rather than for industry interests. If he wins, Ye said, he would continue suing other battery producers to make them revise their warnings, "or to at least make it clear under what circumstances recharging of alkaline batteries can lead to risks."

"If we lose the case," he said, "I will consult and may even charge the State Intellectual Property Bureau for their approving several patents for disposable alkaline battery chargers."

Ye looked on the website of the Bureau and found four kinds of patents for such chargers. "If alkaline batteries really cannot be recharged then how could disposable alkaline battery chargers gain their patent approval?"

Cao Guoqing says safety comes first. "Once the alkaline batteries are recharged, there are always potential risks of explosion or rupture. So for the sake of consumers, all battery products should adhere to safety requirements," he said.



Photo by Sun Yali

By Shan Jinliang

It's been a long wait, both for Chinese volleyball fans and for Feng Kun. But on November 15 last year, Feng, 25, captained China to their first Women's Volleyball World Cup in 18 years.

It was a moment Feng had dreamed of since she was a little girl. She was inspired by the Chinese women's teams that dominated the sport, winning the World Cup in 1981 and '85, the World Championships in 1982 and '86, and taking Olympic gold in 1984. Rivals like Brazil and the USA have come to the fore since then, but now China has returned to the pinnacle of the game and is eagerly anticipating the Athens Olympics.

Feng might be the main woman now, but she's had to fight to win her place in the team. In 2001, she was chosen to play as the main setter of the national team, responsible for organizing the team's attacking moves. At first she felt frustrated and inadequate in the role, but she repaid coach Chen Zhonghe's faith in her by scooping the title of the world's best setter at the 2003 World Cup. "I am happy to win the Women's World Cup with my team, but personally I am happier to get the title of world's best setter," she said.

People around her attribute her success to her persistence and calm state of mind, but hard work has been vital. Feng's colleague Chen Yang told *Beijing Today* that she practiced harder than most of the other players.

#### From track and field to volleyball

Born in 1978 in Beijing, Feng was greatly inspired by her father, an avid sports fan. She became fond of track and field sports and her parents sent her to a sports class when she was in grade three at primary school. One day when she was seven years old, Wang Guifang, a coach in the volleyball class, thought she could be a good volleyball player and she persuaded Feng's parents to allow Feng to become her student. Wang thus became Feng's first volleyball coach.

By 1986, Feng was playing volleyball for one or two hours most days after school and she came to love the sport. Despite being relatively short - at least compared to some of her current national



Photos by Hu Jinxi

teammates such as 1.97-meter-tall Zhao Ruirui - Feng impressed coach Zhang Qin of Beijing Shishahai Sports School, a semi-professional school.

At the age of 10, Feng decided she was destined for a career in volleyball and she begged her parents to allow her to pursue it, rather than focusing on traditional academic pursuits. Feng said to her mother, "This is my first real opportunity in my life, and I want to make good use of it." Her mother later said she was surprised at such an adult announcement, and Feng told *Beijing Today* she could not explain why she said it. She just knew she was following her main interest.

So Feng's mother agreed, on condition that Feng stop playing volleyball if she didn't make sufficient progress in the sport. Feng's parents said one day before she went to Shishahai Sports School that she could give up if she found the going too tough, but there were no doubts in Feng's mind.

#### Ups and downs

Things went smoothly at Shishahai Sports School, and

when Feng reached the age of 13 she became a member of Beijing Volleyball No. 1 Team. She soon became the main force since there was a shortage of squad players in the team. At 17 her rapid progress continued as she was called up to the China national volleyball team, coached by Lang Ping who had helped China's national volleyball team win their first World Cup in 1981.

However, 1999 brought her crashing back to earth as she was not selected by new national volleyball coach Hu Jin. Feng still remembers crying alone in the dormitory as her colleagues headed out for group practice.

Feng's father says she was in a bad mood for a while, but these days she's philosophical about that reverse. "It wasn't unexpected," Feng says. "I wasn't playing at the required level, and to ensure success at the Olympic Games in Sydney it was understandable for Hu to select senior players."

Like her idol Deng Xiaoping, Feng was resolved not to be ground down by minor defeats.

Two years later, Chen Zhonghe took over as coach of the national team, and he promptly chose Feng as his setter. Feng could hardly believe the news and had to be shown the squad list of the national volleyball team before she really took it in.

Feng still felt her setting skills were lacking but she was good at the other four main techniques of a volleyball player: serving, passing, spiking and blocking. For long periods she played as a substitute. "It was a tough training period for me," Feng recalled. "I was not in a good mood so I cut my long hair off."

Chen believed Feng would improve if he found a proper training method for her. In the meantime she kept training from 2 pm to 9 pm and went home with books on the game at night.

"Sometimes I got sick of volleyball and was reluctant to train," she told *China Consumer Journal* last November. "I would even change a round plate for a square one when dining out because I hated seeing anything round. Actually, I just needed some time off."

Training remained tough. Feng suffered a hand injury which delayed her progress and she had to endure some harsh words from the coach about her passing skills.

#### Big break

Feng made her debut in the 2001 World Women's Volleyball Grand Prix and soon recovered her confidence. Taller than most setters, she displayed her excellent skills in blocking, spiking and an improved range of passing skills. She had found her best form since joining the national team, Chen said.

She learned a lot from the games at the Grand Prix. In the game with traditional rivals Japan, Song Nina, the veteran setter withdrew, giving Feng the chance to show her game. China won and went on to finish as runners up in the competition.

From 2001 to 2003, she won a number of international prizes together with the team, including the 2001 Montreux Volleyball Masters Fourth Place, 2001 World Grand Prix Silver Medal, 2002 World Grand Prix Silver

Medal and 2003 Asian Championship Gold Medal, and she was also awarded the title of best setter at the 2003 Montreux Volleyball Masters, the 2003 World Grand Prix and, of course, at the 2003 World Cup.

#### Gearing up for the Olympics

After winning the World Cup, Feng only got 10 days' vacation and soon was back to her club side, Beijing Volleyball Team. With little time to cooperate with her local colleagues and a shortage of mature players, the Beijing team got only one victory and suffered five defeats. As the setter and soul of the team, Feng had to bear most of the pressure. Feng and her team now have to beat Fujian the day after tomorrow to have any chance of staying in the Group A Volleyball League.

As the setter for the national team, Feng is having to get used to responsibility and pressure. Her next goal is the 2004 Olympics in Athens. She is full of optimism. "I think the 2003 World Cup championship was just the first trophy for us, and there will be many more to come."

#### A quiet life

Now in the lime-light more than ever, Feng was reluctant to let the exposure break up her quiet life. So after training, she spends as much time as she can at home with her family, to compensate for the long

periods of absence from home.

"My parents are not in good health," she told *Beijing Today* regretfully. Since 1990, Feng's father has been collecting reports and memorabilia about her career, from Shishahai Sports School training to the last game of the 2003 World Cup. Feng says this support from her parents' has had a lot to do with her success.

Though volleyball is a big part of her life, Feng told *Beijing Today* she might not pursue it as her lifelong career. "I prefer free careers, and journalism might be a good choice," she said. "And I also hope to study an MBA in the future."

In her spare time, she lives the life of a normal young woman, shopping for fashionable clothes on the weekends, and spending holidays traveling with her family, as far as Xinjiang and Tibet.

At her birthday party in 2000, she made a prayer that she would get into the China National Volleyball Team. So far, her dreams seem to be coming true.

When *Beijing Today* asked what wish she had made for her 2003 birthday, she refused to divulge. "The wish might not come true if I tell you now. If it does, then I will tell you."



I'm worried  
the ancient  
music will  
disappear  
altogether,  
since the  
young people  
have no  
interest in  
learning it.'  
- Jia Tingxin



Jia Tingxin (fourth from left) leads the daily rehearsal.

Photos by Hu Jinxi



# Centuries-old Folk Music Fading Out

By Zhao Pu

Folk music that has been handed down from generation to generation for over 400 years in Baimiao, a village in Beijing's Daxing District is dying.

There are now only 13 members of a folk music group, all over 50 years old, who can follow the music scores handed down by their ancestors. The group often performs for villagers during festivals, according to 63-year-old Jia Tingxin, the group's musical director.

"I'm worried the ancient music will disappear altogether, since the young people have no interest in learning it," Jia told *Beijing Today* in an interview on Sunday.

## Taught by monks

Of the many folk music groups based in the villages around Beijing, Jia claims Baimiao's is the oldest, with a history of over 400 years.

"The music was taught by two monks visiting our village from Tanzhe Temple, around the

end of the Ming Dynasty," says Jia. That is what his uncle, a former member of the group, told him.

"But nobody knows why or how they taught the Buddhist music to our ancestors. There are no records about the origins of the group. The music was just handed down from one generation to the next." Jia is the fifth generation in his family to play in the group.

The music uses an ancient notation called *gongchi*, one of many types of traditional musical scores used in China. Dating back to the Tang Dynasty, *gongchi* uses seven notes: *Liu, Wu, Yi, Shang, Che, Gong, Fan*. It employs various symbols to indicate the scale and rhythm of the music, which is played on eight kinds of traditional instruments, including wind and percussion instruments.

## Renaissance

The group did not survive the Cultural Revolution unscathed, as their music was deemed to be Buddhist in color. The group was

disbanded, their scores burned and instruments destroyed. The costumes they wore were made into quilts. "Everything was destroyed," says Jia.

Traditional music in the village was silenced for 20 years. It was not until 1985 that five old musicians decided to start again and the music group was reestablished. At first, they had no money to buy instruments, but the local villagers gave their support and donated 500 yuan with which they bought instruments and began to revive their music.

They resumed performances during festivals and played at local people's weddings and funerals free of charge. They used tips from grateful newlyweds and other patrons to establish an activity fund. In the past twenty years, they have recalled more than 80 old melodies, and taken on several apprentices.

## New crisis

Currently, the group has 13 members, ranging in age from 53 to 71. While groups from



Few people can read the ancient scores today.

other villages tour to other places to earn money, Baimiao musicians stay at home. They only perform locally, and never accept invitations to perform commercially.

"When you perform in other villages, people often ask you to play some pop music and other songs. The older musicians in our group won't accept that, they just stick to our traditional music," says Jia. "Moreover, we joined the music group as a hobby - it's for fun, not money."

However lack of funds is a big problem, Jia concedes, "We want to buy some new instruments to replace the old ones, but we have no money. Today a *yunluo* (gong) cost

400 yuan, we need several thousand yuan to replace the old instruments."

A bigger problem facing the group is a lack of new blood. No young, aspiring musicians are joining the group these days to take the places of the older members who are putting down their instruments and leaving one by one.

According to tradition, new members can only join on the first day of the 10th lunar month. But few young people are interested in this ancient music, and nothing of note has happened on this date for many years.

Last year, two men in their 20s did come to join the group as new apprentices, but after their initial appearance, they failed to show up for subsequent rehearsals. "They said they were busy with study and work," says Jia.

The old musicians still get together at 7:30 every evening for a two-hour rehearsal, "But I don't know how many more years we can carry on for," says Jia.

## Beijing Art Museum Reopens

By Chen Ying

A ceremony marking the reopening of the Beijing Art Museum was held Tuesday afternoon. After an almost two-year reconstruction costing more than 20 million yuan, visitors will again be admitted to the museum from tomorrow.

The museum occupies part of Wanshou Si (the Temple of Longevity), by the northern section of the West Third Ring Road. The temple was originally built in 1577, during the reign of Emperor Wanli of the Ming Dynasty.

The municipal government declared Wanshou Temple one of the city's key cultural heritage sites in August 1979. This is the second time renovation work has been carried out since it was founded in April 1985.

The museum's collections mainly focus on painting, calligraphy, porcelain, weaving and embroidery of the Ming and Qing dynasties, ancient coins of China and foreign countries and modern Chinese and Japanese painting and arts and crafts.

The museum has refurbished all its exhibition halls and rearranged its collection. The exhibition is now arranged into three sections: Buddhist art of the Ming and Qing dynasties, Porcelain art of the Ming and Qing dynasties and Arts and Crafts of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

"To thank those migrant workers' contribution to the development of Beijing and welcome visitors from other parts of China, the museum will offer them a 50 percent discount during Spring Festival," said museum curator Yang Ling at the ceremony.



Photo by Aily

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The new year will be a significant one for construction in the capital, as impressive new structures go up and ancient ones come down or are protected. Among the new landmark buildings slated to be started or finished in 2004 are the National Theatre, designed by French architect Paul Andreu, the State Stadium by Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron, and the CCTV Tower by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. Last year's passage of regulations calling for further protection of some of the city's old hutong and *siheyuan*, or courtyard houses, also means that arguments between preservers and developers are sure to be heated. This active atmosphere should prove the perfect backdrop for the opening of an important new event, Beijing's first Architectural Biennial festival.

That event is the brainchild of Luo Li, president of Beijing Zhihuida Cultural Development Co., the main organizer of the biennial, and a doctoral student in art criticism at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. The biennial will run from September 20 to October 6 and cover all aspects of architecture, from exterior and interior design to construction materials and city planning, under the theme of "Infinity."

*Beijing Today* interviewed Luo Li, who now also holds the title of general secretary of the Architectural Biennial Committee, last Wednesday at her office on Sanlihe Road regarding the goals of the new event and the state of architectural development in the capital.

# Architecture Is More than Buildings

## An interview with Beijing Architectural Biennial organizer Luo Li

By Yu Shanshan

*What were the reasons for the creation of this biennial?*

The title "China International Architectural Art Biennial" popped into my head one day in 2001, and the more I thought about it, the more I thought it would be an exciting and interesting challenge to turn this kind of idea into a viable event. Chinese people generally pay more attention to the interior decoration of their homes than to outside architecture. But if they live in shabby piles of junk everyday, it can go to their hearts – this is a matter of mental health and aesthetic standards that affects the whole nation. The large scale of construction and reconstruction in Beijing presents the perfect time and setting for bringing up this topic. We need to start from the very beginning – by showing people that architecture is and should be art. Then we can begin to change the way things are done.

*There are many art biennials around the world and lots of them address architecture. What differences will there be between this new show and others?*

Let's look at the Biennale di Venezia as an example. It was created in 1895, over a century ago, when modernism was the main force in art and architecture. Today, the Venice Biennial is still a Mecca for avant-garde and academic arts that are creative but do not easily translate to reality. Our event will have a more post-modern feel – voices from all five continents will be respected and we hope to use wisdom and lessons from around the world for solving local problems. At the same time, a goal is to turn these ideas into reality.

*One of your expressed goals is 'to change conventional strategy*



Construction of the controversial National Theater near Tian'anmen Square is scheduled to wrap up by the end of the year.

Photo by A Lang



Luo Li Photo by Geng Lei

*for promoting Chinese architecture and developing the art as an industry.' Could you elaborate on what this means?*

In the past, exhibitions on Chinese architecture focused almost entirely on ancient buildings, but this time, we have set different touring routes for visiting guests that will show all

kinds of aspects of architecture in this country. Participants can travel with our specialists on routes that highlight ancient buildings, different ethnic groups' house styles, local styles of dwellings and public structures in big cities.

Beijing will not be the site for all future biennials. Other cities will be able to bid to host the event, which should then spur great progress in those cities' architectural growth and planning.

*Why have so many western, especially European, architects been active in China in recent years?*

Every year, the number of new buildings going up in China far surpasses that in all of Europe. Some architectural firms there have to rely on international projects, especially ones in China. At the same time,

Chinese real estate developers believe that designs by international architects can be strong selling points for residential complexes and they can afford to hire them, so they do.

*With all the strange designs cropping up, some people say that China is becoming an experimenting ground for international architects. Do you think their involvement is a positive or negative thing for China?*

The presence of foreign architects is definitely positive, but the government should not just give them the green light with no hesitation. I readily admit that some foreign architects simply do projects here to make money. Yet for the masters, being a master means you have responsibilities wherever you are. They need to be serious about each project and carefully measure whether their designs match people's needs and living standards and fit in with the overall cityscape.

*Is the presence of foreign architects putting pressure on their Chinese counterparts?*

Yes. In fact, sometimes, domestic design firms have to have a foreign cooperator in order to win bids. Doing so allows them to survive and overcome developers' preferences for foreign architects. It's a problem in China and one this biennial is aimed at addressing – how to bolster Chinese architects' confidence and creativity.

*How do you think that can be done? Does this event present a chance for domestic architects to*

*step forward out of the shadow of developers and foreign architects?*

Absolutely. To that end, we'll have a special China pavilion, around 260 square meters big or so, to provide a platform for Chinese architects to overcome the dominance of foreign architects and domestic developers. This is not merely an exhibition. It's a social event that can push them to present their ideas and products to the public for their evaluation. I'm sure that Chinese architects are just as good as their foreign counterparts, at least when it comes to their ideas. They just need more trust and support.

*Regarding the controversial subject of Beijing's overall city planning and development, if you were put in charge of reconstructing Beijing, what kind of picture would you have in mind?*

Maybe someday the city of Beijing will be totally reconstructed and some outstanding buildings will be torn down. For now, there is no way to go back and redo the city plan from scratch – all we can do is solve existing problems. Actually, I believe most foreign participants will be interesting in taking part in our urban planning forum and exhibition. I know they are eager to communicate with our policy makers to spell out and find solutions to problems they have encountered while building here.

*What's the government's role in this biennial?*

The government has given us support and hopes to communicate with people in this event. Remember, it is the government that chose the designs for some of the 'weird' buildings. Also, some people feel that the government is ahead of domestic architects in pushing for novelty and reform. However, rushing towards change before really understanding the soul of Beijing is very dangerous. Beijing should not be a site for experimenting and inserting new buildings without first making an overall plan – otherwise the whole city's cultural logic will be ruined. Although we haven't received any money from the government, we have strong support from the ministries of culture, construction and even foreign affairs. I think that's because this architectural biennial is more oriented at addressing a national need than my personal desire to do something. I am certain this fall's Biennial will be very successful.



## Gallery of Mainland Artists Showcases Domestic Talent

By Ju Ming

A major addition to the capital's art scene was made when the Gallery of Mainland Artists opened in the Yihe Art and Culture Square in the Hepingli area towards the end of last year.

Visitors to the gallery can appreciate the works of cutting edge Chinese painters, such as Feng Faqi, as well as more conventional domestic artists and

recognized masters. While the gallery's emphasis is on paintings, it will also be the forum for shows of traditional art forms such as New Year's painting, clay figures, paper cut and wood and stone carving.

Plans for this year include exhibitions of sculptures of celebrities and oil paintings by Russian artists, as well as free painting appraisals and other public activities.

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By Dong Nan

The 10th Chinese Music Awards for 2003 were announced last Thursday, with top awards going to Pu Shu, Han Hong and Zhou Xun. The awards, sponsored by CCTV, Channel V and Shanghai Media Group, were determined on the basis of votes by over 3 million fans from December 1 to January 7.

The awards are divided into two categories, for artists from the mainland and those from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Pu Shu, to no one's surprise, scooped the pool in the mainland category. His recent

## Music Awards Announced



Pu Shu receives Best Male Singer Award

hit *Colorful Days* won both Best Song and Best Music Video. Best Female Singer went to Han Hong, while multi-talented actress Zhou Xun won the award for Best New Singer.

In the Hong Kong and Taiwan section, there was a close battle between male stars Lee-Hom Wang and Jay Chou, and between female stars A-mei and Stef Sun, according to Channel V, but happily,

everyone came out a winner. Wang and A-mei picked up the awards for Best Male and Best Female Singer, while Chou won Best Creative Singer and Sun won Best Music Video for *Wo Bu Nanguo (I Am not Sad)*.

Meanwhile superstar Faye Wong won a special "Perfect Award," given to singers who have won so many awards over the years that it would appear impolite not to give them another.

### WORLDWIDE



The festival is backed by actor Robert Redford and his Sundance Institute for movies

### Sundance Rolls Out Snowy Sidewalk for Indie Elite

Hollywood rolls up its red carpets and heads for the snowy sidewalks of Park City, Utah on Thursday where filmmakers gather for the Sundance Film Festival and its mix of offbeat art-house films from around the world.

The festival, which is backed actor Robert Redford and his Sundance Institute for movies, is the premiere event for US independent cinema and a major market for buying and selling films dreamed up and produced outside the major studios.

Sundance organizers say nearly 40,000 people will journey to the ski town east of Salt Lake City to watch films ranging from *November* starring *Friends* star Courteney Cox Arquette to *Tarnation*, a film that was made for the rock-bottom price of \$200 and is said to be "part documentary, part narrative fiction, part home movie, part acid trip..."

(Reuters)



From left David Schwimmer, Lisa Kudrow, Matthew Perry, Courteney Cox Arquette, Jennifer Aniston and Matt LeBlanc

### Emotions Run High as 'Friends' Cast Nears Finale

The six co-stars of NBC's smash hit *Friends*, the top-rated comedy series on US television, say emotions are running high on the set as they near production of the show's final episode.

"We're like very delicate china right now, and we're speeding toward a brick wall... and inevitable pain," Jennifer Aniston (aka Rachel Green) told television critics gathered for a question-and-answer session with the cast on Tuesday in the Warner Bros. television studio where the series is filmed.

"And we're going to smash

into a million pieces," added Lisa Kudrow, best known as Phoebe. "It's a deeper loss than I was expecting."

The six performers, seated together in director's chairs, struggled to articulate how they felt to be bidding goodbye to a show that has been central to their lives — and a centerpiece of prime-time TV — for 10 years. (Reuters)

### German Filmmaker Tykwer Lured by Perfume

German director Tom Tykwer (*Run Lola Run*) is sniffing around *Perfume* — *The Story of a Murderer*, a thriller based on the best seller by Patrick Sueskind.

The novel, which has sold about 12 million copies worldwide, tells the story of a boy born with an extraordinary sense of smell who becomes a murderer in order to distill the essence of beauty into a perfect perfume.

Tykwer is working on a new version of the *Perfume* script, said Martin Moszkowicz, head of production at the film's German producer, Constantin Film.

Moszkowicz added Tuesday that Constantin was "in talks" with Tykwer to direct but that nothing has been signed yet.

(Reuters)

### Drugs, Sweat and Tears at New Maradona Musical

Graphic scenes filled with drugs, sweat and tears marked the premiere on Saturday night of a stage musical chronicling the turbulent rise and fall of Argentine soccer megastar Diego Maradona.

A warts-and-all portrayal ranging from his impoverished youth in a shantytown to his celebrated goals in Argentina's 1986 World Cup victory over England, the show entitled *Number Ten: Between Heaven and Hell* played to a full house in downtown Buenos Aires.

Audience members said they were shocked by the frank treatment of Maradona's dark side. The mixture of fact and fiction depicted orgies, violent scuffles with paparazzi, and clashes with everyone from Britain's Prince Charles to a corrupt Argentine president. (Reuters)



Emilio Bardi as Diego Maradona

## Magic Kitchen: A Sweetie for New Year



Jerry Yan and Sammi Cheng

By Dong Nan

The latest of the latest crop of New Year's movies is now screening in Beijing cinemas. *Mohuan Chufang (Magic Kitchen)* is a light comedy from Hong Kong starring Andy Lau, Sammi Cheng and Jerry Yan.

Murong You (Sammi Cheng), a restaurant chef and owner, cooks everything according to a recipe book bequeathed to her by her mother. Meanwhile there is a family curse that has overshadowed three generations — she will be unlucky in love. This prophecy seems to be coming true, until her boyish assistant Xiaoke (Jerry Yan) starts showing an interest. In Japan, she bumps into her ex-boyfriend (Andy Lau) who is planning to marry her best friend (Maggie Q)...

"I am confident about the movie," said director Lee Chi-NGai in a press release, "since I have Jerry Yan as my trump card, his good looks and emotional performance is fatally attractive to female audiences!"

Cartoon-like star Jerry Yan is a former member of F4 and star of the hit TV soap *Liuxing Huayuan (Meteor Garden)*. *Magic Kitchen* is his first movie.

### Rock Review

## Multi-national Troop of Hip-hop

By Wang Yao

Strongly influenced by Japanese and Korean music, Chinese hip-hop band Yincang (Hidden) proclaim that hip-hop is a kind of culture, not a fixed musical style.

The four members are from three different countries, Jeremy (Zheng Jie) and Drifty Heff (He Zhong) are from the US, Mark is Canadian while Wang Bo is from Beijing. The band performs frequently at underground clubs around Beijing.

Regarding their recently released self-titled debut album, the band claimed in a press release that the greatest part of the album was something "hidden" within it (geddit?).

The band write all their own material, and the lyr-

ics, which are all in Chinese, are simple and humorous.

Line up: Zheng Jie, Mark, Drifty Heff and Wang Bo.

*Yincang (Hidden) 2003*  
Recommendations: *Dongde (understanding)*, *Zai Beijing (Welcome to Beijing)*



## Scarlett Blows In

By Dong Nan

In *Gone with Wind*, Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable swept the world off its feet. Though everyone thought it was over between them, tomorrow is indeed another day... First came Alexantra Ripley's best selling sequel to Margaret Mitchell's novel, then came *Scarlett*, the TV soap opera, to light up the screen with the legendary lovers. Now the DVD is available in China.

Directed by John Erman (*Roots*), *Scarlett* was shot on 53 locations in three countries and incorporated 200 speaking roles and more than 2,000 extras. Joanne Whalley-Kilmer and Timothy Dalton perform as Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler, and they are indeed captivating as the

passionate lovers.

With an unprecedented simultaneous airing in a number of countries around the world in 1994, *Scarlett* dazzled viewers wherever it was shown. In US, Germany, Italy and Spain, it ranked as the top mini-series of the year.



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# Spring Festival Special

## How Chinese Feast for the Holiday

By Chen Si

If Spring Festival is the pinnacle of the traditional Chinese cultural calendar, then its best feature is undoubtedly the traditional New Year's Eve feast. All around the country, families and friends gather on and around that day to prepare and eat special foods, exchange toasts and wish each other the best as they ring in the new year.

However, the specifics of what is served and how differ by region, though all these meals are bonded by common themes of auspicious wishes and family unity. Many special dishes draw their significance through puns, as their names have the same sounds as words of auspicious meaning.

Musts on tables in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, are green vegetables, soybean sprouts and celery, each of which has symbolic connotations. Green vegetables are called *anle* vegetables, meaning they bring peace and joy, while sprouts can also be called *ruyi* vegetables, (as in *wanshi ruyi*) and represent wish fulfillment. Celery appears because its Chinese name is a homonym for diligence, so the stalks are meant as symbols of that principle in wishes between people.

In some parts of Hunan province, the New Year's feast is based around a *liyu*, or carp, that must weigh over one kilogram. Another common dish is a huge cooked pig elbow.

Custom in southern and central areas of Anhui Province call for there being two fish on the feast table. One should be a carp (or sometimes a salmon) that is not to be eaten as a sign of affluence for the coming year. The other fish has similar meaning, but is for actual consumption.

Qimen in southern Anhui is particularly known for its interesting New Year's dining conventions. One of its special dishes is the first served, a mixture of bean curd, mushroom, bamboo shoot, shelled shrimp and fresh meat that stands for peace and fortune.

A dish called "chicken catching beans," another harbinger of future fortune, is a treasured Spring Festival treat in Anhui's capital, Hefei. The host of a meal should eat a leg from this chicken, signifying "catching the foot of fortune," to let the money come pouring in during the coming year.

In nearby Anqing, hosts or heads of family are all but required to eat bowls of noodles before feasts formally begin, as noodles are said to look like lines of money strung together and the act is supposed to bring good luck to everyone on hand.

Nanchang, Jiangxi Province is the source of the famed New Year's treat *niangao*, or fried rice cake, now enjoyed throughout the country. People from Nanchang also like to include rice noodles (*mifen*) and eight-treasure rice pudding (*babaofan*), symbols of good harvest and wealth, in their Spring Festival feasts.

On the tables in nearly every home in Zhejiang Province is likely to be a helping of fish balls, symbols of reunion. In the city of Shaoxing, a dried fish head is presented in a bowl to represent all the things to look forward to in the coming year. People in Zhejiang have a similar habit to their Anhui cousins and put out a whole fish that is not eaten. That convention has changed over the years, however, and today many families present carved wooden fish instead of real ones as attractive, and possibly less odorous, table decorations.

In areas north of the Yangtze River, a popular New Year's food is *babaocai*, a dish made of greens, carrot, hot pickled mustard tuber (*zhacai*), mushrooms, ginger, pickles and sesame.

People from Guangdong Province traditionally prepare lettuce, a symbol of vitality, for their New Year's feast, which also often includes corn, a sign of treasure and wealth.

Those same concepts are represented by fish and chicken dishes on family tables in Sichuan Province. Normally chicken kidney is served, as the word for kidney is pronounced the same as the word for "affluence".

Other traditional New Year's foods cut across regional borders. In different parts of China, dates represent hopes that Spring is nearing, dried persimmons mean "may everything turn out as you wish," almonds symbolize happiness, tofu is a sign of family happiness, the fruit *changshengguo* is believed to impart long life, and *niangao* stands for growth.



Smoked fish or meat are special treats beloved by Hunanese during the holiday.

Photoby LiShuzhuan

## Dining Out During Festival Season

By Wesley Leilee

### Celebrate "Double Happiness" All Month

The Shang Palace Chinese Restaurant offers unparalleled New Year Eve's packages starting at 2,688 yuan with different rewards such as Chinese liqueur or a box of *niangao*, the glutinous rice cake traditionally served for New Year's. Enter a lucky draw with fantastic prizes like complimentary rooms, gift boxes and bottles of wine.

**Where:** Shang Palace Chinese Restaurant, Shangri-La Hotel Tel: 6841 2211 ext. 2989



Yusheng - Chinese-style raw fish

### Food and Fun

On the eve of Chinese New Year, join the celebration at the Dragon Palace and prepare your own *jiaozi*, enjoy a chance to win wonderful prizes and take part a traditional Lion Dance.

**Where:** Dragon Palace, Kempinski Hotel Beijing **When:** January 21, 5:30-10:30 pm **Tel:** 6465 3388 ext. 4108

### Special Set Menus

The Sui Yuan restaurant presents three Chinese New Year set menus, priced at 268 yuan, 368 yuan or 468 yuan per head plus 15 percent service charge.

**Where:** Sui Yuan, Hilton Hotel Beijing **When:** January 21 **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext. 1230



Chinese rice pudding - niangao

### Niangao Fiesta

The Horizon Chinese Restaurant presents homemade delights of sweet and sticky *niangao*, available in five special flavors with the finest ingredients: eight treasure (*babao*), strawberry, green tea, coconut and jinhua ham. Our exquisite *niangao* comes shaped like gold bars or fish, symbols of luck and happiness, perfect as gifts on their own or in special holiday baskets. Cost: 188 yuan and up

**Where:** The Horizon Chinese Restaurant, Kerry Centre Hotel Beijing **When:** until January 30 **Tel:** 6561 8833 ext. 41

### Glories of the Monkey Year

The 1,688 yuan "Family Feast" and 2,388 yuan "Prosperity Year Feast" at the Gloria Plaza Hotel include roast suckling pig, sauteed pig tongue and dried oyster with lettuce, steamed mandarin fish, pan-fried *niangao*, double-boiled chicken soup with ginseng and Chinese herbs, deep-fried baby pigeon and braised bamboo with mushroom and vegetables.

**Where:** Gloria Plaza Hotel Beijing **When:** January 21 **Tel:** 6515 8855 ext. 3178

### Family Festival Buffet

Enjoy a massive buffet of New Year's treats including free soft drinks and local draft beer, priced

at only 128 yuan per person net. A series of handmade pizzas priced at just 45 to 70 yuan each are also available.

**Where:** Orchid Terrace, New Otani Changfugong Hotel **When:** January 21 - 28 **Tel:** 6512 5555 ext. 61

### Make Your Own Menu

For a memorable Chinese New Year's Eve dining experience, enjoy our master chefs' special creations and create your own festive menu with friends and family.

**Where:** Four Seasons Restaurant, Jianguo Hotel **When:** January 21 **Tel:** 6500 2233 ext. 8041.

### Village-style Potluck

Enjoy a *pencai*, or potluck meal, a village-style dining tradition at the Oriental restaurant for Spring Festival. Bring family and friends to dig into a lavish spread served in custom-made wooden pots.

**Where:** The Oriental, Traders Hotel Beijing **When:** January 20 - February 6 **Cost:** 688 yuan per table of 10 people **Tel:** 6505 2277 ext. 34



Pencai

### Knock-out Dinner Packages

Dine in fine Chinese New Year's style with our six special menus, priced from 1,388 yuan to 3,588

yuan net for a table of ten, and including two big bottles of soft drinks, four bottles of beer and a real *niangao* pudding. Groups of over five tables get one complimentary night in the hotel.

**Where:** Dynasty Restaurant and ballroom, Jingguang New World Hotel **When:** nightly until January 31 **Tel:** 6597 8888 ext. 2138



Fish cake

### Family Gathering at Novotel By James Liu

In celebration of Chinese New Year, the chefs of the Utopia Restaurant have prepared special Shandong and Cantonese dishes for family gatherings available in set menus priced at 518 yuan to 998 yuan, including three bottles of local beer and two bottles of soft drinks.

**Where:** Novotel Xinqiao Beijing, 2 Dongjiaominxiang, Dongcheng **When:** January 21 - 28, 11:30 am - 2 pm, 5:30 - 9:30 pm **Tel:** 6513 3366 ext. 2402



Shark fin

### Old Beijing-style Celebration

Celebrate the holiday in style in the Grand Ballroom, which will be decked out like a street from Old Beijing. As CCTV's Spring Festival show is broadcast on large screens, indulge in traditional treats such as Beijing duck, roasted chestnuts and *niangao*.

**Where:** Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing **When:** January 21, 6:30 pm - midnight **Cost:** Menu A - 288 yuan net per person; menu B - 238 yuan net per person, half price for children under 120 centimeter tall. Prices inclusive of free flow soft drinks and local beer. Tickets available in the hotel lobby from 9 am - 9 pm. **Tel:** 6590 5566 ext. 2132



### Recipe: Niangao - New Year's Rice Pudding

This sticky, gooey treat is a favorite at Spring Festival around China, and is a symbol of wishes for physical growth for children and career growth for adults.

### Ingredients:

350 g Chinese brown sugar  
750 ml (3 cups) cold water  
115 g (3/4 cup) cornstarch  
450 g glutinous rice flour  
1 pinch salt  
2 tbsp peanut oil  
1 red date, pitted

### Procedure:

Put sugar and 300 milliliters of cold water in a sauce pan, bring to a simmer and cook until sugar completely dissolves. Remove from heat and add remaining water. Cool.

Mix cornstarch, rice flour and salt in a large bowl. With a wooden spoon, make a well in the middle of the mixture, gradually pour in the sugar liquid and slowly work in the flour until everything is thoroughly incorporated. Mixture should be runny. Stir in one tablespoon of oil.

Use remaining oil to lightly grease a round cake tin or enam-

el dish 25 centimeter wide and four centimeter tall. Strain the rice flour mixture through a wire sieve into the dish to make sure there are no lumps.

Put the dish in a steamer and steam for three hours, until pudding is done. To tell if the pudding is ready, pierce it with a sharp instrument - if it comes out smooth and clean, the *niangao* is cooked. Bury the date in the center of the finished pudding.

The *niangao* is now ready to serve, or it can be spruced up with fruits and nuts, or sliced and fried or stir-fried.



## Spring Festival Special

## Crafts for Show and Sale

By Li Sha

A wonderful venue for getting into the Spring Festival spirit, as well as for appreciating the revival of some fading traditional crafts and art styles is the Baigongfang museum near the Temple of Heaven.

The museum is filled with works in the milieu of traditional Chinese handicrafts, such as jade ware, cloisonné, ivory carvings, lacquer ware, lace, carpets and embroidery.

This is a perfect time for visiting the Baigongfang, not only because these goods are on display, but also because visitors can watch them being made by nearly 100 top craftsman and then purchase their favorites, making very personal gifts or nice decorations for the home.

The three-storey museum contains 17 separate workshops, each devoted to one kind of traditional craft. The workshops for cloisonné making, jade carving and lacquer carving cannot be missed, as they are home to acknowledged masters of their arts whose work represents the pinnacle of the craft.

A workshop on the second floor is filled with old Beijing-style folk items, such as clay and dough figurines and paper-cuts. These fun and attractive crafts can add a nice flavor of the past to Spring Festival celebrations and are very reasonably priced, figurines going for around 10 yuan to 100 yuan and paper-cut greeting cards tagged at just 5 yuan each.

Another outstanding feature of the museum is that at each workshop, visitors can try their own hand at these crafts under the patient instruction of masters. After a hard session of cutting, molding, carving or shopping, visitors can head to the beautiful, traditional courtyard outside the south exit of the museum and indulge in some old-style snacks while checking out a wide range of folk toys and decorations on offer. Overall, Baigongfang is a place to learn, to have fun, to shop and to generally get a feel for Beijing's past glory.

**Where:** No. 1, Beice Lu, Longtanhu, Chongwen  
**Open:** 8:30 am — 5:30 pm



Baigongfang's dramatic front gate

## Getting Decked Out Like an Old Beijinger

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Tradition calls for giving and wearing new clothes at Spring Festival, so why not go head-to-foot in traditional garments that recall styles popular in the capital centuries ago.

A good place for one-stop traditional clothing shopping is the first basement level of the Xindongan Shopping Mall in Wangfujing, which is home to outlets of several clothing makers that have enjoyed strong reputations in this city for decades: Majuyuan for hats, Ruifuxiang for silk and Neiliansheng for shoes.

Hatmaker Majuyuan was established in Beijing in 1817, and has fashioned headgear for many major historical figures, including a fur hat for the Panchen Lama. Today, this store offers many interesting old-style hats that all display Majuyuan's famed use of top materials and fine craftsmanship. Prices range from just 30 yuan to 2,000 yuan, depending on style and material.

Founded in 1893, the Ruifuxiang silk store has long been an institution in this city and still sells excellent silk perfect for fashioning elegant *tangzhuang* clothes as well as cotton, fur, nylon, polyester and other more modern fabrics. Prices range greatly, with common silk starting at around 56 yuan per meter. Expert tailors on hand can take those materials and turn them into beautiful, customized garments.

The Neiliansheng shoe store has been hand-crafting cloth footwear since 1853 in Beijing. The store's most famous product is multiple-layer cloth shoes, called *qiancengdi*, made with pure wool toes and soles of thick white cloth, stitched with sturdy hemp fiber. A little softer on the foot are *maobudi*, traditional shoes that have soles made of pure cotton and bamboo leaves. Either way, these shoes are perfect accompaniment to a traditional-style outfit yet are comfortable, sturdy and fun enough for regular wear.

**Where:** Old Beijing Street, level B1 of Xindongan Shopping Mall, Wangfujing, Dongcheng **Open:** 9:00 am — 10:00 pm



Handmade embroidered shoes, 169 yuan

## Gifts for Your Feet

By Sun Ming

Traditional cloth shoes look fun and are surprisingly comfortable, but it can be challenging to find times and situations where they are

appropriate — they certainly would look a bit weird in most business or work contexts.

Spring Festival, however, is a perfect opportunity to slip on a pair and enjoy the comfort and traditional style of cloth shoes as you stroll around or visit friends and relatives.

When you are ready to make a cloth shoes purchase, a good place to go is the Tongshenghe store on Wangfujing Avenue, which stocks a wide selection and has been making top quality traditional footwear in the capital since 1933.

Among the store's best-selling items are handmade embroidered silk shoes. The shoes come with base colors of red and black, with a few exceptions, and are beautifully embroidered with patterns of flowers or mandarin ducks.

"Our shoes are more like delicate handicrafts," store manager Pei Guozhong told *Beijing Today*, "In the past, most of our customers were foreign tourists, but today more and more Chinese women are wearing these shoes for parties, holidays and similar occasions."

There are also many choices for men at Tongshenghe. They may not be as elaborate or beautiful as the women's shoes, but the men's footwear choices are very comfortable and attractive in their own way. All men's shoes come in basic black with soles of white cloth or black rubber.

All of Tongshenghe's cloth shoes are made at the company's own factory. The store also sells leather shoes, which can be made to order, however that service has yet to be extended to the cloth footwear.

**Where:** No. 225, Wangfujing Avenue **Open:** 9 am — 10 pm



Men's cloth shoes with white cloth soles, 49 yuan

## Dressing for the Holiday

By Chen Si

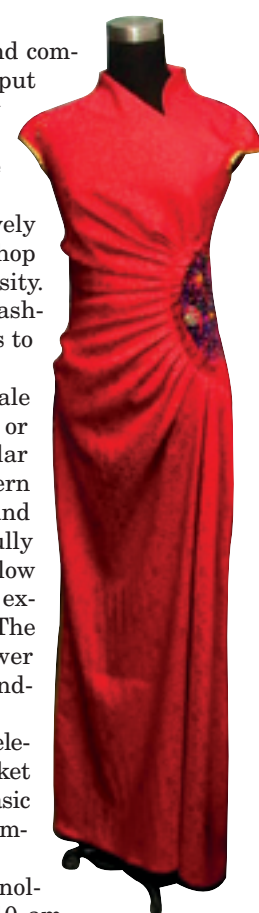
Spring Festival is a time for family and comfort, but also a time when people like to put on their holiday best. Over the past few years, a popular custom has been to get decked out in traditional Chinese-style clothes, called *tangzhuang*.

A good place to pick up some attractively different *tangzhuang* is the Feitianwu Shop near the north gate of Tsinghua University. Shop owner Li Ran also designed the fashions, which feature creative modifications to traditional styles.

Among the eye-catching garments on sale is a striking, shiny red sleeveless *qipao*, or cheongsam (1,200 yuan). Its vertical collar is not even, giving it an elegant, modern feel, and the front is decorated with a round patch of impressive embroidery. Carefully placed pleats at the top of the dress allow it to stay tight, as *qipao* should, but also expand as the wearer moves or breathes. The dress is decorated with dragon and flower designs and its cuffs highlighted by hand-stitched embroidery in golden thread.

The selection of original pants make elegant accompaniment to a *tangzhuang* jacket or more modern style tops. They come in basic black and are made of silk brocade bearing images of dragons and traditional symbols.

**Where:** Room FC8, Science and Technology Exhibition Center, Haidian **Open:** 10 am — 10 pm



Qipao, 1,200 yuan

Photos by Sun Haitao / Tian Xiaotong

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## Spring Festival Special

# Year End Show at Red Gate Gallery

A large exhibition of traditional Chinese paintings, oils, prints and sculptures by a group of artists including Huang Yan, Lu Peng, Yang Mian and Li Gang.

Where: Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Watchtower  
When: till January 31, daily 10 am - 5 pm  
Admission: free  
Tel: 6525 1005

Exhibitions

## Stage

## Robert Gallup

World-famous escapologist Robert Gallup returns to Beijing. In 2002, he wriggled his way out of seven ropes while suspended 45 meters in the air near the Great Wall. What does he have up his sleeve this time?

Where: Capital Gymnasium  
When: January 19, 20, 24, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 180 - 880 yuan  
Tel: 6833 5552

## Drama: Qinqi Pengyou Haosuanzhang (Even Relatives Keep Careful Accounts)

A comedy produced by and starring renowned TV entertainer Chen Peisi.

Where: Poly Theater, first floor of Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie  
When: January 18 - 20, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 280 - 800 yuan  
Tel: 6500 1188



## Celebrate with Peking Opera

Three evenings of outstanding traditional and new operas performed by renowned actors including Liu Changyu, Diao Li,

Qian Haoliang and Qu Suying.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Xichang'anjie  
When: January 22 - 24, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80 - 680 yuan  
Tel: 6559 8285

## In Honor of George Balanchine

To celebrate the 100th birthday of George Balanchine, the world's foremost contemporary ballet choreographer, the Opera National de Paris, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, the Royal Opera House and National Ballet of China will cooperate in performing a set of his works.

Where: Tianqiao Theater, 30 Beiweillu, Xuanwu  
When: Saturday, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80 - 880 yuan  
Tel: 8315 6300

## Spring Festival Evening

The Chinese Broadcast Arts Troupe will perform songs, dances, snippets of Peking Operas, cross talk and plays.

Where: Ethnic Cultural Palace Theater, 49 Fuxingmennei Dajie, Xicheng  
When: January 23, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 60 - 480 yuan  
Tel: 6605 2404

## Tchaikovsky Works

The Russian National Ballet Theatre will perform *Swan Lake* on January 23 and 24 and *The Nutcracker* on January 25 and 26.

Where: Poly Theater, first floor of Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie  
When: January 23 - 26, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 100 - 800 yuan  
Tel: 6500 1188

## Soul of the West

A show of Jiang Zhixin's 81 grand and romantic traditional painting of China's remote western regions.

Where: Today Gallery, 9 Wenhuiyuan Beilu  
When: Sunday - February 4, daily 9 am - 5 pm  
Admission: free  
Tel: 6223 8309



## Zheng Xu: Prints to Celebrate Spring Festival

Zheng Xu's prints are simple and natural, with a poetic and fresh feel embodied in subjects such as butterflies and children.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huaweili, north of Beijing Curio City, Chaoyang  
When: January 22 - 31, daily 9:30 am - 7 pm  
Admission: free  
Tel: 8779 0458

## Lao Dan's Solo Exhibition

The owner of the Hart Salon, Lao Dan, creates oil paintings and traditional Chinese ink works with lines that refer to the human body with a naturalistic, inspired feel.

Where: Hart Salon, Sanlitun  
When: till January 28, daily 3 pm - midnight  
Admission: free  
Tel: 6504 6010



## Activities

## Rolling Stones with Beijing Hikers

This hike starts from a park located northwest of the Ming tombs in Changping. We will walk up a valley with rocky cliffs on either side and a clear stream running through its middle. Eventually we will come to a shepherd's hut at the top of the valley. From there we head into a quarry at the top of the mountain and pass a ruined village. This trail provides excellent views and as we follow the windy ridge, we'll get glimpses of the "Henry Moore Rock."

Where: pick up outside the Starbucks at the Lido Hotel  
When: Sunday, meet at 8:30 am, return around 4:30-5 pm  
Admission: 150 yuan  
Tel: 13910025516

## New Year Green Tea Festival

During Spring Festival, the Penglaixianjing Teahouse is offering special green tea treats for family gatherings and parties. Chose from dumplings made with green tea, steamed buns with green tea filling, even green tea soup, and 20 other varieties of dim sum made by experienced chefs. The set price for this tea-riffic feast is just 58 yuan for four people and includes free Internet use and access to DVDs, chess and cards.

Where: 24 Guangximen Beili, Xibahe, Chaoyang  
When: 10:30 am - 1:30 am  
Tel: 6448 1803  
Admission: Free



## Music



## Wu Bai is Back

Pop-rock singer Wu Bai performs songs new and old for his Beijing fans. Look for an appearance by Chinese rock god Cui Jian.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, 54 Baishiqiao Lu  
When: Tonight, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 180 - 1,000 yuan  
Tel: 6833 5552

## Immortal Songs

The China Song and Dance Troupe performs folk and popular songs from China and abroad, including *Kangding Qingge* (Love song in Kangding), *Tong Yishou Ge* (The Same Song), *Don't Cry For Me, Argentina* and *O Sole Mio*.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Xichang'anjie  
When: January 20, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 50 - 380 yuan  
Tel: 6559 8285

## Children's Concert

The China Youth Chamber Music Orchestra will give a performance of famed Chinese and foreign music including *Moon River*, *Butterfly Lovers* and *Memory*.

Where: National Library Concert Hall, 32 Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian  
When: January 23, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 20 - 50 yuan  
Tel: 6848 5462

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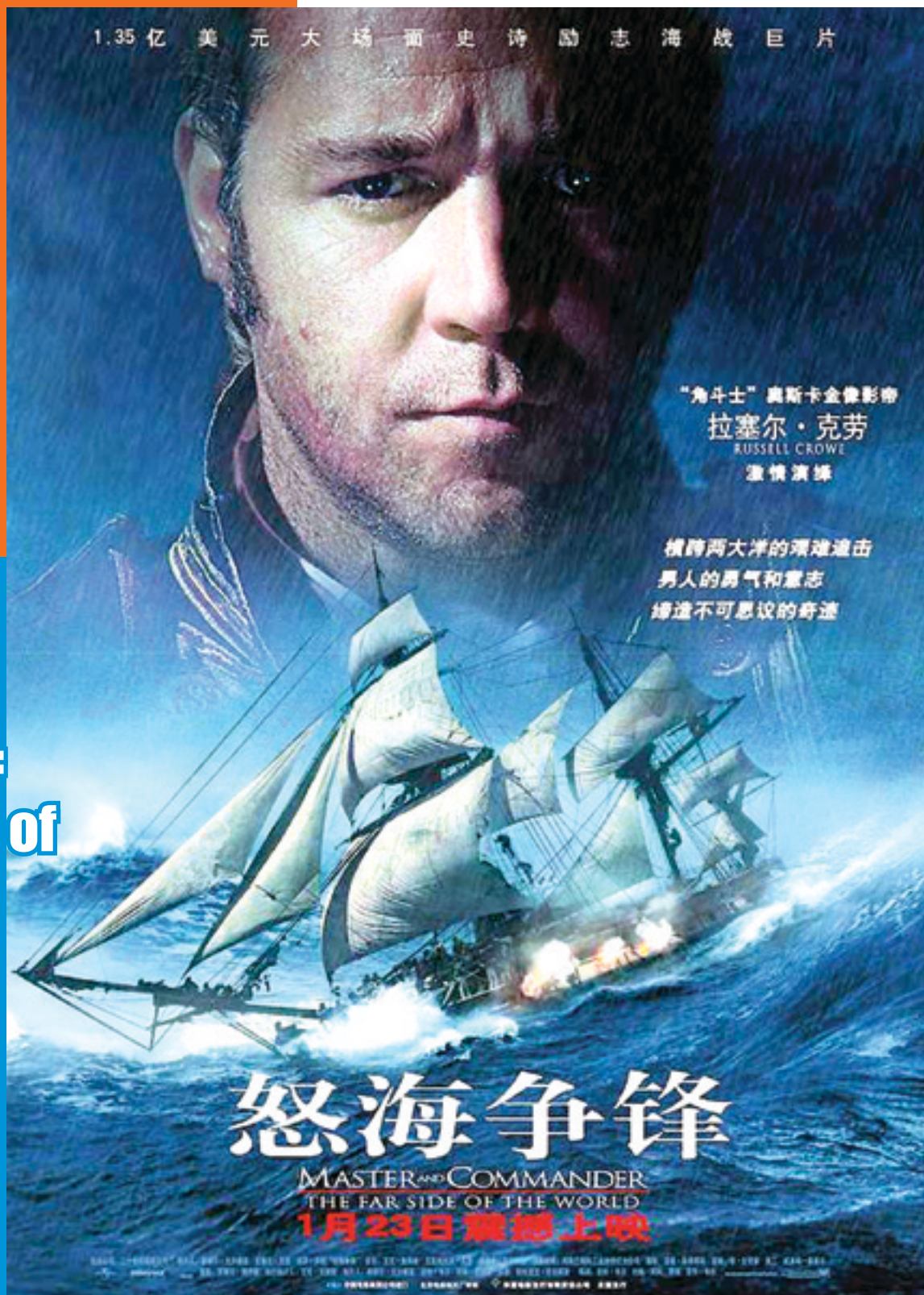
By Dong Nan

## Movies

## Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World

Directed by Peter Weir, starring Russell Crowe. In this epic action flick set during the Napoleonic War, a British frigate, HMS Surprise, and a much larger French warship with greater fire power stalk each other off the coast of South America.

Where: local cinemas  
When: from January 25



## Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai (Butterfly Lovers)

This new animated film is based on the famed Chinese tale of love and tragedy of the same name. Featuring the voices of Jacky Ng, Elva Siu and Rene Liu.

Where: local cinemas  
When: from January 16  
Shijieshang Zui Teng Wo de Nage Ren Qule (Gone Is the One Who Held Me the Dearest in the World)

Directed by Zhang Jie, starring Siqing Gaowa, Huang Suying, Shi Weijian, Gong Peixin. This warm yet heart-wrenching movie addresses the issues of death and grief. A daughter dutifully teaches her mother to use a computer, but gets frustrated when she struggles with the effects of aging. The mother responds by hiding her problems from her daughter. They come to rely on each other as they prepare for the end of the mother's life.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang  
When: Tonight and Saturday, 8 pm  
Admission: 50 yuan  
Tel: 13901134745

## Wohu Canglong (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon)

The movie that made wuxia action a big thing

overseas and made Ang Lee one of Asia's hottest directors. A beautifully shot tale set in China's past of a master swordsman struggling to forswear his profession in order to find peace with the woman he loves, while a young woman of great talent seeks to find her own destiny.

Where: B2M, near the south gate of Ditan Park  
When: Sunday, 8 pm  
Admission: free  
Tel: 6426 1091

## Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever

An explosive tale of two spies (Antonio Banderas and Lucy Liu) and lifelong rivals forced to give up the hunt for each other to team up against a deadly enemy.

Where: local cinemas  
When: from January 23





Spring Festival Special

# Temple Fairs



## Worship the Earth God

By David Huang

The Ditan Temple Fair will feature reenactments of traditional Ming and Qing ceremonies to worship the God of Earth. The park is the site of the altar where sacrifices were once made to the God of Earth.

This fair is one of Beijing's most popular and long standing. There will also be a range of folk performances, children's puppet shows and fashion shows, art exhibitions, ice lanterns and snow sculptures, and traditional Beijing snacks.

There will be a folk culture garden featuring song and dance of western China, as well as Red Storm Ditan Rock Concert. On the south side of the Sacrificial Altar, visitors can sing karaoke.

**Where:** Ditan (Temple of Earth) Park

**When:** January 21 to 28, 9 am to 5 pm

**Admission:** 6 yuan

## Visit the Monkey King

By Tony Shaw

Lianhuachi Temple Fair features a special landscape of Huaguo Mountain and Shuilian Cave, the residence of the Monkey King in *Journey to the West*.

Hot air balloons will be a feature of the fair for the first time this year, and

Yu Guocheng from Wuqiao, Hebei, China's home of acrobatics, will show visitors how he drives a bus carrying 10 passengers with only one ear.

Other song and dance performances, such as *yangge* and duets of northeast China will be performed, and Shifuxian, or poem-string, an over 200-year-old folk art on the verge of extinction will make its debut at the fair.

**Where:** Lianhuachi Park

**When:** January 22 to 27

**Admission:** free



## Just for Kids

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Children get the best of Spring Festival; *hongbao*, those little red envelopes stuffed with cash, from their relatives, as well as temple fairs. This year, there is a new temple fair organized exclusively for kids by the Beijing International Sculpture Park.

Nearly all the activities are specially designed for children. In the east section of the park, cartoon characters will act as guides. You can take pictures with your favorite characters or even play games with them.

In the west area, there is a special make-your-own-sculpture activity. Chil-

dren will have the chance to make their own masterpiece with the help of real experts.

There is also a hall featuring toys, many of which cannot be found in the big stores. Big toys such as Mashimaro, Polar Bear and Mr. Milk Cow will be offered as prizes for those who win games.

**Where:** Beijing International Sculpture Park, Shijingshan Lu, Shijingshan District

**When:** January 21 - February 7, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm

**Admission:** 2.5 yuan for kids, 5 yuan for adults

## Nationality Customs

By Jill

Chinese Ethnic Culture Park Temple Fair features exhibitions and performances by many of China's 55 minority nationalities. A number of troupes from ethnic minority areas will exhibit their skills at the fair.

A Miao nationality troupe will perform *Climbing Knife Mountain* and *Going Through the Fire*, and a Tu nationality troupe will perform *Wheel Swing*, a piece for which they won the gold medal at the China Ethnic Minorities Sports Meeting last year. Another key attraction will

be the Wa nationality's *Circle Dance*, as visitors are welcomed to join in.

There will also be stunt performances, recreational games, folk singing and dance performances, as well as a ceremony for issuing commemorative year-of-the-monkey envelopes.

**Where:** Chinese Ethnic Culture Park

**When:** January 19 - January 28, 8

am to 5 pm

**Admission:** 20 yuan

## Old Beijing Folk Customs

By Cheng Limiao

The goat is about to give way to the monkey in the Chinese lunar calendar, so the theme for this year's temple fair at the Old Beijing Panorama Park is "monkey culture."

Old Beijing Panorama Park is in Nankou, Changping District, 40 kilometers from downtown Beijing. It features a miniature replica of old Beijing, with over 100 buildings made with tiny bricks and tiles, modeled on the thriving capital of the Qing Empire. Many landmarks visitors can see are today no more than names on the map of modern Beijing.

The park uses lighting and electronics to create characters from the clas-

sics, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *Journey to the West*, *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *Romance of Three Kingdoms*.

Of course the Monkey King of *Journey to the West* will be the big star this year. There will be various monkey-related performances and activities, including monkey training, an exhibition of monkey stamps, funny monkey games for children, stone monkey game.

**Where:** Old Beijing Mini-Landscape Park, Nankou Town, Changping District

**How to get there:** take bus 345, 919 or 920 from Deshengmen, or mini bus from Beijing Zoo

**When:** January 22 to 28, 9 am -5 pm

**Admission:** 10 yuan

## Buddhist Culture

By Jill

Hongluo Temple Fair is one of the only fairs in Beijing held in a functioning temple, and many people make the pilgrimage every year to enjoy the temples profound sense of Buddhist culture and the scenic splendor of the classical buildings.

During Spring Festival, the abbot will hold prayer meetings and give benedictions to the visitors.

For the more secular minded, there

With Spring Festival comes temple fairs, a tradition that started in China during the Liao Dynasty (907-1125). Around Beijing, there are a dozen or so temple fairs taking place over the two-week festival period, offering a variety of entertainments and traditional snacks.

will also be folk dancing and acrobatics by Hebei Province's Cangzhou Troupe in the temple courtyard. Traditional games will also be held, such as "striking the bell" and "hitting the copper cash hole."

Traditional Beijing snacks are, of course, a key feature. Visitors can also see exhibitions of paintings calligraphy and photographs.

The three durable plants of winter; pine, bamboo and plum blossom add to the temple's beauty. There are also thousands of plum blossoms, including pink plum blossoms, red plum blossoms and weeping willow plum blossoms.

**Where:** Hongluo Temple

**How to get there:** take Bus 916 or 936 from Dongzhimen to Huairou District and then a 10-minute taxi ride to the temple.

**When:** January 22 to 28, 8 am to 5 pm

**Admission:** 30 yuan

## Oldest of Them All

By Cheng Limiao

The oldest temple fair in Beijing, Changdian Temple Fair takes place in the Liulichang area, one of the most popular antique streets in the capital.

It was first held more than 400 year ago, during the Ming Dynasty, and derived from the Festival of Lanterns.

This is the most popularly attended of all Beijing's temple fairs, not just because it is free, but because of its real atmosphere of old Beijing.

Peddlers gather here to sell traditional folk arts, handicrafts and snacks, and visitors can see weddings, a fortune-blessing ceremony, cross-talk and Peking opera, as well as the traditional lion dance, stilt-walking and colorful wheels shows.

**Where:** Hepingmen, Xuanwu District

**When:** January 22 - 27, 9 am - 5 pm

**Admission:** free



## Royal Flavor

Beijing's only royal temple fair takes place in Suzhou Street at the Summer Palace.

In order to recreate the old style of the city, red lanterns and colorful decorations will be hung and all the employees will dress in traditional Qing Dynasty costumes.

Visitors can exchange Renminbi for Qing style copper cash, which can be used in the 64 shops in Suzhou Street.

One of the main features of the Summer Palace temple fair is the royal parade, in which "Emperor Qianlong" will traverse the street and commune with the masses.

At Beigongmen Square, a traditional performance of *jian* drum, dragon drum and lion dance will create another focus point. To mark the Year of Monkey, a special funny dance named *Monkeys Praying for Longevity* will also be performed.

On the central island in Kunming Lake, there are acrobatic performances and single player dramas. Visitors can stand in Lansheng Pavilion and enjoy Peking opera, or *pipa* performance at Jiayinxuan.

**Where:** Summer Palace

**When:** January 22 to February 5, 9 am to 4:30 pm

**Admission:** 30 yuan

Photos by David Huang



## Spring Festival Special

# Foreigners Who Like to Sing and Dance

**Beijing TV's annual competition pits talented foreigners against each other in tests of language and cultural skills.**

By Chen Ying

Among the eagerly-awaited TV programs that will be aired in Beijing and nationwide as part of recent Chinese New Year's tradition, one will involve foreigners that truly qualify as "China hands." These impressive *waiguoren* will be competing to win Beijing TV Station's three-night "2004 Arts from Our Land Competition," broadcast January 22 to 24 on BTV Channel One.

Since the competition was launched in 1995, nearly 200 participants from almost 30 countries have participated and it has become one of Beijing TV's most popular Spring Festival programs. The televised finals of this year's competition will involve 44 contestants, hailing from Brazil, France, New Zealand, Singapore, Russia, the US, Mozambique, Uzbekistan, Germany, Benin, Vietnam, Italy, England, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, El Salvador, Gabon, Thailand, Canada and Uganda.

They will give a wide range of performances usually associated with beloved Chinese TV New Year's extravaganzas, such as singing, Chinese opera, kung fu and acrobatics.

To make this year's program even more interesting, organizers have added two sections. "Super experience" requires contestants to complete special missions to show their understanding of Chinese culture and communication abilities. The talented foreigners will also be made to answer quiz questions to demonstrate their Chinese language and familiarity levels.

Final scores will be based on their quiz answers, "super experience" results and performance quality. Zhang Xiaoyan, one of the editors of the program, told *Beijing Today* during rehearsals last December, "Judges never expect that these foreigners could speak such fluent Chinese, give such perfect performances or have such well-rounded and deep understanding of Chinese culture."

On the final evening, aside from the awards for the top three places, other prizes will be given out, including the Youth Talent Prize, Triathlon Prize and Rising Star Prize, as well as recognition for best artistic performance, team spirit, language and culture, creativity and stage presence.



Contestants, hosts and performers wave goodbye at the closing of this year's show, which has already been taped and will be aired on BTV 1 starting Thursday evening. Who came out on top remains a closely-guarded mystery.



Laurent Pinson

## Best or Bust

By Zhang Ran

Frenchman Laurent Pinson said he has been possessed by an Asian dream since he was six years old and was fascinated by some Chinese characters he discovered on a vase in his family's home in Marseilles. The characters later proved to be forgeries, but his passion was real and has carried to this very day.

Now a student at Beijing University, Pinson has fulfilled his child dream of reaching China and then some. In the "2004 Arts from Our Land Competition" program, he is certain to bring smiles to the audience's face with his rendition of a humorous extract from the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* done in traditional *pingshu*, or storytelling, form.

As a doctoral candidate in economics at Helsinki University, Pinson first came to China in September 2000 to collect data for his dissertation about the influences of different cultures on communication. In order to be able to do that research, he first had to undergo intensive Chinese language studies. "It's easy to start, but difficult to keeping going," he noted about learning Chinese.

After just two years of language classes at Beijing University, he can now speak fluent Chinese. "Compared to writing, I prefer speaking. I am very happy that people cannot recognize I am a foreigner when I am on the phone," he said.

Pinson has long been a fan of Chinese comic dialogue and storytelling and studied the form from actor Ding Guangquan. His preference for comic monologue later led him to sit in on professor Wang Jingshou's class "Art of Talking and Singing"

at Beijing University, where he learned about many different styles of talking art. "Once professor Wang invited Liu Zhao, a *pingshu* performer, to our class, and when I heard his performance, I was struck that *pingshu* was exactly what I was looking for," he recalled.

"In comic dialogue, you have to try to make the audience laugh continuously, which puts pressure on both the performers and the audience. But *pingshu* is different, there is less laughter, but it still is attractive," said Pinson.

Besides reciting *pingshu*, this talented Frenchman's hobbies include doing Chinese tongue twisters, practicing calligraphy and playing tennis.

"I have a strong interest in Chinese culture, and hope to someday surpass Dashan," referring to the Canadian speaker of fluent Chinese famed throughout China.

## Everyday She Writes the Book

By Chen Ying

Ivana Angioni of Italy worked for three years in the Beijing office of a British tour company, but gave it up last May in order to focus on writing a book about traveling in China based on her own experiences.

She said her hometown is very close to that of Marco Polo. "Her new book may make her a contemporary Marco Polo," said Zhang Xiaoyan, one of the editors of the program.

"In my former job, I traveled exten-

sively through China. I like writing about traveling, so I decided to write about touring this country," Angioni recalled. "First I was going to write just in Italian. But, my Chinese colleagues knew about my travels, my life and my opinions about China. They asked me, 'why don't you write it in Chinese or English?'" She immediately saw the idea had merit.

Now she is writing in both Italian and English. "One of my former colleagues will help me with the translation," she said.

Angioni will sing the song *Danyuan Renchangjiu* (Wishing We Last Forever) made famous by Chinese pop star Faye Wong. The lyrics were taken from a renowned poem by Song Dynasty

(960-1279) master Su Shi. "My Chinese friends suggested I sing that song in the final because it's really meaningful for Spring Festival," she added.

A fan of cuisine and cooking, Angioni worked briefly as a chef in Europe after leaving her job last May. Among her repertoire are some Chinese dishes, including *jiaozi*.

Her open and enthusiastic personality makes her a natural for the program, and throughout the tournament she has encouraged and helped other participants while never suffering stage fright. "I feel really comfortable. The competition is one of the best experiences I have had in China," Angioni said.



Ivana Angioni



Brett Taurere

## Compete to Meet

By Zhang Ran

For New Zealander Brett Taurere, this competition has proven a welcome opportunity to make some new international friends.

"I never thought that I could meet so many friends through the contest," said Taurere, who came to this country with his Chinese wife three years ago and has since worked as a family teacher. Beijing TV's program has introduced him to a whole new set of international friends, who got together just last weekend to celebrate a birthday.

"I've met another New Zealander through the contest, Steve Elson. It is wonderful that two New Zealanders can communicate with each other in

Chinese," he added.

For the performance section, Taurere will be singing in the group imitating pop stars F4. The other members of that impromptu boy band are from South Korea, Russia and Japan, and the four have become fast friends thanks to their rehearsals.

"I thought I would be very nervous on stage, but it's no big deal," Taurere said. He decided to take part after seeing news about the program on TV and being encouraged by friends to enter the running.

Taurere honed his singing chops belting out karaoke with his Chinese friends and family and said he is a big fan of pop star Nicholas Tse, particularly his song *Thanks For Your Love*. "In New Zealand, sometimes we play

guitar at home and very occasionally we sing karaoke, but in Beijing, it is a frequent thing," he said.

Taurere and his wife recently moved from Guanyuan in Xicheng District to a new apartment near Dongzhimen that they are currently in the process of decorating. "There used to be a lot of *pingfang* (old one-storey houses) behind my old apartment, but they have all disappeared. Beijing literally changes every day," he noted. That dynamism is one of the reasons he and his wife plan to live in the capital for the rest of their lives.

With Spring Festival just around the corner, Taurere is looking forward to getting together with his new found friends to set off fireworks in the countryside and otherwise celebrate the season.

## Inspired at First Sight

By Chen Ying

French artist Sophie Tedeschi first came to Beijing in 1994 to attend an exhibition of her oil paintings at the China National Museum of Fine Arts. "I immediately fell in love with Chinese culture," she said.

Soon after, she started learning how to create traditional Chinese ink paintings.

"I have dedicated my life to painting. I love Chinese ink paintings, they're very beautiful," she gushed. Tedeschi was so captured by China on that first visit that she has lived here ever since.

"I decided to participate in the competition because I thought it presented a good opportunity to share my paintings with others," she explained. For the program, the French artist intends to perform a dance routine during

which she will pen a Chinese ink painting.

"I choreographed the dance myself. My body told me what I should do," she said proudly. She chose *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (Butterfly Lovers) as the background music to the performance.

"I'll also be presenting my fashion designs during my performance," said Tedeschi, referring to her outfit, which bears patterns from her paintings. "It looks like art, art you can wear."



Sophie Tedeschi

Photos provided by Beijing Television Station

## Stories from Backstage

By Chen Ying

Though the contestants in Beijing TV's "2004 Arts from Our Land Competition" had different personal reasons for coming to China, they all share an interest and reverence for Chinese culture.

Some are here learning kungfu, while others are studying the art of Chinese opera. One is writing a book about China, while a few others are hoping to pursue singing or acting careers in this country.

Don Hamersley came to China from the US three years ago on a photographic mission and is currently working as a teacher at Beijing Foreign Studies University. "I've gone to every province to take pictures," he said. "China changes so quickly, maybe five times faster than the US." He will sing a popular Chinese rock song in the performance section of the program.

"I came to China to learn Chinese," said Tamamura Yoshitaka, a Japanese sophomore at Beijing Language and Culture University. He hopes to translate his language abilities into China-related business in the future. Yoshitaka and three other participants from other countries will imitate smash Chinese boy band F4 in a rendition of one of their pop hits.

El Salvador native Irina Moldovan is married to a Chinese man, while Brett Taurere from New Zealand lives here with his Chinese wife.

This year's program will also feature the return of some participants from past shows, such as Lilian Santos from Brazil, Aleksei Nemikin from Russia and Nabil Huening from the US. Former contestant Khotam from Uzbekistan will be flying in from his hometown just to take part in this year's show.

Italian contestant Ivana Angioni told *Beijing Today* that the program is less a competition than a big party that foreigners and Chinese can all enjoy.



Spring Festival Special

# Going Native for Chunjie

By James Liu

As Spring Festival for the Year of the Monkey approaches, how are you planning to spend this traditional holiday season? Below are some stories of Chinese New Year's past from local expats that may provide you ideas for getting the most out of the *Chunjie* experience.



Rigmor Kristin Johnsen is the cultural attaché in the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

## Six Festivals and Counting

By Rigmor Kristin Johnsen

Big bangs and bright fireworks ushered in the Year of the Dog in January 1982 in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. That was my first Spring Festival in China. I had arrived in Beijing five months earlier to start my studies at the Beijing Language and Culture University.

With a travel permit in hand, holiday spirits high and a grasp of the Chinese language, I started my thrilling odyssey – a first journey of discovery into Chinese society beyond the capital – to Xi'an, Chengdu, Chongqing and down the Yangtze, a journey into history, culture and Spring Festival traditions.

Bicyclists in Xi'an, after spending their ration coupons, carted home their market treasures of fish and fowl, fruits and sunflower seeds for the coming big reunion feast. I have always enjoyed exploring local markets, for the smells, the colors, the choice and selection of goods, the chatter and transactions. That year in particular was a time of exciting new changes.

From my train's hard berth I gazed out at the changing landscape of the loess plains to the lush fertile green of Sichuan. Strolling the old streets of Chengdu, a blonde haired *waiguoren* was a rare sight then, and onlookers gathered while kids squealed with delight as the fireworks' extra big bang (set off inside a wash basin) startled me. I wandered around, capturing Chengdu new year images and poetic wishes in beautiful calligraphy on the bright red "*chunlian*" adorning doorways.

I have enjoyed six Spring Festivals in China since then.

In 1993, the *hutongs* of Beijing heard the last traditional fireworks frightening away evil spirits as the Year of the Rooster was welcomed. I missed flowers in 1982, but in the new millennium, markets abound in floral beauty rich in symbolic significance to the Chinese and I see cherry blossoms and orange trees serving as envoys of good wishes. Children have high hopes for treasures in red *hongbao* with gilded greetings of happiness and plenty, and maybe, like me, they enjoy watching the dragon dances and traditional festival performances while eating sugar coated apples on a stick or venturing to taste the myriad other traditional snacks available at the crowded festival fairs. Spring Festival marks the season of awakening and revival – and it unites in feelings and togetherness people around the globe.

I wish you all a joyful, healthy and inspiring New Year of the Monkey! Happy Spring Festival!

## Mission Possible: Enjoy New Year

By Nicholas Krippendorf

Spring Festival, China's most important holiday, is nearly a week away and if you are new to China you might be wondering how to prepare yourself for the big party. Well, for a smashing celebration what you need to do is familiarize yourself with two basic concepts of Chinese culture: *guanxi* (relationships) and *keqi* (politeness). Those who can understand and apply these two concepts will definitely be in for a great time.

Guanxi is the magical glue that holds society together. After nearly half of Beijing's population returns home to celebrate the Spring Festival, many parts of the city will become a ghost town. It can be quite depressing, as stores close, restaurants shut down and streets go empty. If you want to remain sane, you'll need a friend.

Pick up a phone, call a com-



American Nicholas Krippendorf has lived in Beijing for three years.

## Dine Another Day

By Matt Brosenne

Just as for every holiday of every country or every religion, Chinese New Year cannot be defined quantitatively without taking the unique celebratory traditions of each individual and place into account. My Chinese New Year tradition remains fairly unsettled, as I've only spent a few here in the Chinese mainland.

The past few years, I have spent some New Year's with my girlfriend's family in Tianjin. The combined Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Year feeling of those events is no doubt the result of the preparations of invasion-force proportions set in motion for the occasion. It takes a lot of work to gear up for a three-day party, to say nothing of a seven-day one.

Anyone with any familiarity of Chinese culture knows to expect food and drink to come into play in these kinds of events. In my particular case, this happens to an extremely frightening degree. The word food simply doesn't do justice to the Chinese New

rade and invite yourself to one of his family's Spring Festival dinners. I'm sure he'd be happy to have you tag along and if not, keqi will force him to accede to your forced invitation.

Now, before your big dinner with your pal's family, you should familiarize yourself with three basic sorts of keqi: consideration, politeness and good manners.

Consideration means preparing a suitable gift for your friend's grandparents. Since Chinese people, particularly the older folks, can be very superstitious, you ought to be careful about what you give them. Many Chinese people believe receiving a clock, cut flowers, or any kind of sharp object as a gift is bad luck.

Last year I got a nice little fruit basket for my friend's grandparents that had several oranges, which convey a message of success, as the Chinese words for the two sound similar.

Unfortunately it wasn't until a week later that I was told they were both diabetic and unable to eat food with sugar. Oops!

Politeness means being careful not to offend any of your friend's family members at the dinner table. You can do this by graciously choking down the fish head and cold marinated cow's intestines that your friend's mother demands you eat.

Lastly, you mustn't forget to practice good manners. This means after drinking a gallon of *baijiu* with your pal and his uncles, you'll try your hardest to keep from tossing the fish head and cow's intestines all over grandma's bathroom.

Have fun, be safe and happy New Year to all you monkeys out there!

Year meal – it should be called "The Feast" instead. I have always been fond of such feasting and have been known to eat five to 10 times by body weight at Thanksgiving and Christmas back home in the US.

Last year, I started strong, besting my most impressive personal performance. But halfway through just day one, as I woke to calls for breakfast on day two, I cried the tears of the tormented, unable to eat another bite. "The Feast" called, but it had to carry on without me, the one sad moment in an otherwise unstoppable party.

I can't remember much after that. The feasting that followed made me so fat my eyes sealed shut and I had to be rolled from room to room. I remember waking from a food coma with the shakes and asking for more *nian'gao*, only to get a slap in the face.

Good food, good people, good fun, good times. Every day should be Chinese New Year. I wish the best of the Year of the Monkey to you all! Now, bring on "The Feast" – I swear I'm going make it into day two this year.



After four years in Taipei, Matt Brosenne headed to Shanghai in 1995 and now heads the International Business Division of CSM, China's only television ratings service.

Spaniard Isabel Ramallo (right) is the press officer of the European Commission Delegation to China.



## Chunjie Nostalgia

By Isabel Ramallo

I have been in China for six years, but have unfortunately only been able to spend one Spring Festival in this country.

That was six years ago, when some friends invited my husband and me to their home in a small village in Shandong Province. It was not very far away, just about five hours by bus and then an hour more by taxi.

The family cooked wonderful *jiaozi* for us. We were out the whole day visiting the village, which stands near the Yellow River, and it was very, very cold. I think I have never felt so cold in my life. Their house had no heating or hot water, so we had to mix tea water with cold water to

wash. I have lived very long in the countryside of Spain, but things are decidedly different in rural China.

The family was very kind to us and even let us sleep in their apartment.

I have adopted the Chinese tradition of going home during the Spring Festival. I usually work hard during Christmas and take my holiday during Chinese New Year to head home to Spain or meet my family somewhere else.

One year I was in Vietnam, where the people also celebrate Spring Festival. It was very nice. Another time, I was in Thailand. My husband and I went to Chinatown to see the Spring Festival festivities. I felt the Chinese there followed lots of traditions that I do not see so easily in Beijing any more.

Along those lines, I find Beijing a bit confusing these days. When I first arrived here six years ago, I could feel Spring Festival coming very clearly. Back then, Chinese didn't use to celebrate Christmas.

Now, however, everything has changed. Christmas is present on the streets of Beijing as it is elsewhere in the world, at least on the commercial/shopping side. I feel this has eroded a bit of the very special festive feeling of Spring Festival. Maybe it is only nostalgia, but I used to love the approach of Spring Festival, it was the one time of the year that felt special. It is not so special to me any more, though I know that for Chinese families, this is still the most important celebration of the year.

## Guy Fawkes on Baijiu and Jiaozi?

By Allen Holt

It looked like Guy Fawkes' night and December 31 all rolled into one from the window of my 14th floor apartment overlooking Wangjing as we said good-



Brit Allen Holt is a teacher at Dell International English.

bye to the Year of the Horse and welcomed in the Year of the Sheep.

I'd just returned from visiting friends at Guomao. With a belly full of delicious *jiaozi*, and fortified by more than a little *baijiu*, I reflected on my first Chinese New Year's eve.

The Chinese people are a hospitable and generous lot at any time, but particularly so

at Spring Festival, when families are reunited with relatives and manners, etiquette, and friendly bonhomie are even more apparent than usual. Earlier I'd passed through a Beijing railway station and seen more people than I'd ever seen together in one place in my life before, as students made their way home, workers went back to their families and loved ones from all over China returned to Beijing or left the capital for their hometowns.

"Happy Year of the Sheep," my host said.

"I'm a dragon," another friend informed me. "What Chinese zodiac sign are you?"

"I'm the year of the tiger," I replied, pleased with myself for having remembered and not suspecting a thing.

"Oh gosh, you must be 41 then!" My host shouted in feigned surprise as my mind raced ahead. The seventh day of Spring Festival would make me 42. And on February 14, I'd be 43? At that rate, I'd be pensioned off whilst still in my prime! I despondently reached for the fortune cookie in front of me and unwrapped it. 'Nostalgia isn't what it used to be', it read.

## A Northeastern Holiday

By Alex Write

In search of a more traditional holiday, I traveled with friends to a small town in the Northeast. We were drawn by the irresistible pull of the good times, and the promise of spending New Year's Eve in Puningsi, which delightfully translates to "Temple of Universal Tranquility."

Our first night in the area was spectacularly cold, the razor sharp wind easily slicing through an assortment of shirts, sweaters and winter coats. On reaching the temple, exit from the taxi was met by lots of wincing and sharp intakes of breath, a murmur of activity that for a moment obscured the fact that the expected crowds were simply not there.

Our flopping, undignified emergence from the cab was, however, silently observed by two monks who appeared to have some difficulty in keeping a straight face. Inside there were a few guests, mostly devout and contemplative, but they remained outnumbered by monks looking slightly amused.

The room was enormous and filled with the smell of incense. Meager light filtering down from the stars framed the doorway, and picked out the clouds of air made with each shivering exhalation. We turned, rubbing eyes in the half light to look behind us at a single multi-story hunk of wood, a monstrous Guanyin, of which



Brit Alex Write has studied at Tsinghua University since September after spending last year traveling around China and other parts of Asia.

we could see only the lower reaches, the pleated skirts and wooden toes.

Outside the building, the temple complex seemed enormous. Roaring braziers stood everywhere, and strings of illuminations had been thrown, seemingly at random, over the edges of outbuildings, small shrines, and in the branches of trees. A small group of worshippers nearby were singing quietly, counting down the hours to the New Year.



## Spring Festival Special



Photo provided by the Temple of Heaven

# Pray for Blessings at the Temple of Heaven

By Hou Mingxin / Zhang Bo

Built in the first half of the 15th century, the Temple of Heaven is the most important of Beijing's imperial temples. It is here that the emperor came every winter solstice to offer sacrifices to his ancestors and to pray for a good harvest.

Since his rule was legitimized by a mandate from heaven, a bad harvest could imply he had fallen from heaven's favor, hence the importance emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties attached to the ritual.

Reenactments of this prayer ceremony are being held at the Temple of Heaven from January 22 to 26.

## Heaven worship dance

The dance will be performed in the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest, the main building of the Temple of Heaven. It was here that the emperor prayed for good harvest in spring because it was believed to be the place nearest to heaven.

Aimed at displaying the grand spectacle of the Qing heaven worship ceremony, the performance will include a kung fu dance and traditional *wende* dance, featuring 230 dancers.

## Imperial honour guard show

Danbi Qiao (丹陛桥) is a 360-meter long, 30-meter wide bridge linking the three main structures of the Temple of Heaven.

en, the Circular Altar, the Temple of the Gods and the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest. The bridge slopes upward from north to south.

On the day of the ceremony, the emperor would leave the Hall of Abstinence before sunrise and enter the royal tent on Danbi Qiao to put on his ceremonial garments. Twigs of pine and cypress were burned so that the smoke would permeate the altar area, and drums were struck to signify the beginning of the ceremony.

For the reenactment, Danbi Qiao will be covered with banners and flags. The audience will also have the chance to see tra-

ditional royal wares used in the ceremony.

The performance will culminate with a traditional military review, featuring a parade of the imperial honour guard, with 200 performers dressed in helmets and armor of the Qing Dynasty.

## Ancient music at Nanshen Chu (南神厨)

Before the actual ceremony began, the emperor would go to Nanshen Chu, a royal kitchen where foods dedicated to the gods were prepared, to ensure that everything was ready for the rituals.

During the cultural week, ancient Chinese music used during the ceremony will be performed

at Nanshen Chu.

The music originated in the Zhou Dynasty, about 3,000 years ago, and is termed *yayue*, a kind of sacred music in Chinese history.

Exclusively used in the worship ceremony, the instruments to perform *yayue* are made from eight materials; skin, stone, gold, earth, wood, bamboo, silk and gourd.

## Lion dance

Lion dances are performed at numerous kinds of celebratory activities throughout China.

In this performance, lion dances featuring both southern and northern Chinese traditions will be performed at the north and south gates of the Temple of Heaven.

Fifty performers will wish visitors a fruitful and peaceful year.

## Heaven worship dance show

**Where:** Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest

**When:** 11 am; 3 pm

## Imperial honour guard show

**Where:** Danbi Qiao

**When:** 10 am; 2 pm

## Ancient music performance

**Where:** Nanshen Chu

**When:** 10, 11 am, 2, 3 pm

## Lion dance

**Lion dance of southern China**

**Where:** North gate

**Lion dance of northern China**

**Where:** South gate

**When:** 9, 10 am, 1:30, 2:30 pm

**Admission:** 30 yuan

# Good Luck with Bells and Drums

By Hou Mingxin / Lei Li

Striking a bell or drum is a traditional way of celebrating significant days in China, and is a particularly popular way of marking the most important festival – the Spring Festival.

Traditionally the sound of the bell and drum is believed to bring good luck and an abundant harvest in the coming year. Beijingers who want to maximize their good luck by striking bells or drums can visit the following locations:

## Dazhong Temple

Built in 1733 during the Ming Dynasty, Dazhong (Big Bell) Temple was originally called Juesheng Temple. It was here that emperors presided over rituals praying for rain. Local people called it Dazhong Temple because it housed an enormous Buddhist bell cast in the Yongle Period (around 1420) of the Ming Dynasty.

The Yongle Bell is a state-level cultural relic that hangs in the Giant Bell Tower. At 5.6 meters in height, with a weight of 46.6 tons, it is one of the largest bells in the world. It is engraved with over 100 Buddhist sutras and incantations that total more than 230,000 characters, and has a mellow and pleasing tone that carries over a dozen kilometers. On the eve of Spring Festival, the Yongle Bell is struck 108 times, an auspicious number, to celebrate the coming of a new year.

**Where:** North-west Third Ring Road, Haidian District **Admission:** adults 10 yuan, students 4 yuan **Open:** 8:30 am – 4:30 pm; (on January 21 the temple will stay open till 1 am)

## Bell and Drum towers

The Bell and Drum towers, the time telling centers for the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, are one of Beijing's key tourist attractions.

The Drum Tower was first built in 1272 during the Yuan Dynasty. It was rebuilt in 1297 during the Yuan Dynasty and in 1420 and again 1539 during the Ming Dynasty. The two-storey wooden structure is 47 meters high. On the second floor there were originally 25 drums, one big drum and 24 smaller ones.

The Bell Tower, made of brick and stone, is 48 meters high and is also two stories.

In the middle of the second floor is the big copper bell that was used to ring out the time. It hangs on a wooden framework and features a round wooden peg that knocks the bell.

**Where:** Dianmenwai Dajie, Dongcheng District. **Open:** 8:30 pm – 1:00 am, January 21. **Admission:** 50 yuan (group discounts available)

## Temple of Wisdom Attained (Zhihua Temple)

The Temple of Wisdom Attained is one of the largest and finest examples of Buddhist architecture in Beijing.

The drum in Zhihua Temple is rare in terms of its huge size and traditional dragon design. Though usually used for religious events, the drum is available for beating by the general public. It is the only temple in Beijing that has opened its bell and drum towers to the public.

**Where:** 5 Lumicang Hutong, Dongcheng District. **Open:** 8:30 pm – 1:00 am, January 21 **Admission:** free, 5 yuan to ring the bell, 20 yuan to beat the drum



Ringling in the New Year.

Photo provided by the Bell and Drum Towers

## Touch the Stone Fish

By Zhang Ran

Touching the "Stone Fish" is considered lucky for visitors to Tanzhe Temple, a Buddhist temple at Tanzhe Shan on the western outskirts of Beijing.

The temple was built during the Jin Dynasty (265-420), just before the founding of Beijing, hence the saying "First there was the Tanzhe Temple, then there was Beijing."

According to an old fable, in ancient times, northern China was afflicted with a terrible draught. When the emperor of heaven heard about it, he decided to release a



Photo by Photocom

fish, which was a present given by the Dragon King, to the earth.

At midnight, monks at Tanzhe Temple found a stone fish in the courtyard. When they touched it, the fish gave a musical sound, after which a heavy rain started to fall and the people were saved.

It is said that touching the Stone Fish can stave off disaster and disease and bring good luck.

## Monkeys and Bells at Baiyun Temple

By Su Wei

Baiyunguan (White Cloud Taoist Temple) is famous not only as the first Taoist temple in northern China, but also for the temple fair held during the first month of the Chinese New Year. The most popular activities at the fair are "Touch the stone monkey" and "Hitting the bell in the hole of an ancient coin."

Rising early on the first day of the lunar year to pray for blessing at Baiyunguan has long been a customs for many Beijingers. People queue in long lines to touch a stone monkey concealed in the gate of the temple or another one hidden in the base of a screen wall in front of the gate of the Yuan Dynasty temple.

In fact there is another stone monkey carved in a stele in the east courtyard, but few people today are able to find it. Beijingers

maintain that finding and touching the monkey, which is no bigger than the palm of a hand, is not just for fun. It is also an expression of their wish to lead a happy, sound and safe life in the new year.

Past the entrance of the temple, there is a bridge under which a Taoist priest used to sit with two large papier-mache coins hanging in front and behind him, each with a bell in the middle, waiting for people to throw coins to hit the bell. Now there are only oversized Chinese coins with bells under the bridge, the priest has gone. People stand on the bridge and throw coins at the bells. Although few succeed in hitting them, people continue to try, as good fortune is said to come for a whole year to those who do.

**Where:** Bai Yun Guan Lu, Xicheng District. **Open:** 8:30 am – 4:30 pm **Admission:** 10 yuan

# Huge 'Fu' to Bring Fortune

By Zhang Ran

A banner with 101 embroidered characters of "fu" (福), meaning "good fortune" is on display at Beihai Park to mark Spring Festival.

The art work, made with 160,000 meters of silk thread, consists of one huge red "fu" and another one hundred small "fu" on a piece of yellow satin.

The banner, 3.7 meter's long and 5.2 meter's wide, is embroidered with delicate and intricate traditional designs. The large "fu" is composed of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac.

# Pray for Happiness

By Lei Li

Dongyuemiao Temple is the largest temple of the Zhengyi Sect of Taoism in northern China.

The Temple of the God of Taishan Mountain, on Shenlu Street, is said to have been built as a place of worship for the Supreme Celestial Emperor of Taishan Mountain, one of the five sacred mountains of China.

From January 21 to 28, people can get a "Good fortune" (fu) character, the symbol of good luck in the New Year, at the temple.

"The Hundred Family Names Lanterns" are located on both sides of Fu Jie (Happiness Street). Virtually every Chinese surname can be found here.

"Hitting the hole in the copper coin" will bring financial blessings, while "Standing on the Bu Yun Stone" will vastly enhance your prospects of promotion.

**Where:** 14 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District. **Open:** 8:30 am – 4:30 pm **Admission:** 10 yuan



## Spring Festival Special

# Monkey Brings Me to the World



By Guo Yuandan

Li Guang, 63, has been performing Beijing Opera for 54 years. He first rose to fame in 1974 for his portrayal of Zhao Yonggang, a brave soldier in a modern opera *Pingyuan Zuozhan* (*War on the Plains*). In 1979 Li played Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, in *Da Nao Tian Gong* (*Havoc in Heaven*), which brought him international fame, especially in Japan.

## Monkey is my lucky totem

Li Guang said, "I will be very busy this year. 2004 is the Year of the Monkey, and I became famous for playing the Monkey King. So I have been invited to attend many special activities, such as Shanghai Television's Spring Festival Party," Li told *Beijing Today*.

"My son said 'Dad, monkeys have brought you so much good luck all your life, you should invite one home to show respect.' It happened that a Japanese friend sent me a plate with a monkey on it several days ago. So I immediately put it on the middle of the table."

As well as *Havoc in Heaven*, Li has also played Sun Wukong in *Tales of Journey to the West*, adapted from the classic tale by Wu Cheng'en.

Sun Wukong is an extremely popular figure, symbolizing bravery, intelligence and justice. "I like the monkey character very much. He is clever, creative, intelligent and humorous," Li said. "It was because of Sun Wukong's charm that when *Havoc in Heaven* was performed by the National Beijing Opera Theatre it was so warmly received by audiences and I became known in China."

To Li's surprise, his performance was greeted even more enthusiastically abroad. As a member of China's National Beijing Opera Theatre, Li performed in Japan and Canada in 1979. "Everywhere we went, the theaters were sold out. Most foreigners had little understanding of our country in the 1970s. They never knew China had such wonderful art. They were interested in everything, including our *lianpu* (opera facial makeup) and costumes."

"Though they could not understand our lyrics, they highly praised our art. They couldn't be satisfied with what they had seen on the stage, they went to the backstage dressing room, and touched our costumes, swords and spears. They also let us paint their faces and tried on our costumes," Li recalled.

*Havoc in Heaven* had 30 performances in Japan, every one a sell-out. "I also had many fans in Japan," Li laughed, "One



Li Guang as Monkey King in *Da Nao Tian Gong*

young Japanese lady wrote to me that she had made a clay monkey as lucky thing. Because her friends all knew she liked me, they said 'hello, Mr. Li Guang' to the monkey, every time she brought it out."

## I am the best Monkey King

For a 63-year-old, Li looks young. He attributes this to his daily exercise regime. "I can no longer perform wu sheng (a martial art), but I don't want to give up exercising. Lifelong learning is very beneficial."

Li was born in 1941. His father, Li Zongyi, was a famous Beijing Opera performer, and Li took to the profession as a natural. He began acting at the age of nine. "I remember my first stage experience. I

played a child in the story *Sanda Hujiashuang*, and sang four lines. With my appearance, the audiences applauded. It was their applause that led me choose a career as an opera performer."

He enrolled in the China Drama School in 1952 and started to study performance. The roles in Beijing Opera are divided into four *hangdang* or types, *sheng* (male character), *dan* (female character), *jing* (painted face character) and *chou* (clown), and each of these can be sub-divided into smaller groups. For instance, *sheng* incorporates *lao* (old) *sheng*, *xiao* (young) *sheng* and *wu* (martial-arts) *sheng*. Most actors specialize in one sub-types. However, Li proved

adept at all three kinds of *sheng*.

Although *Havoc in Heaven* showcases the martial-arts, Li is proud of the way his interpretation of the role differs from those of other actors. "I can say confidently that I am the best actor who portrayed Monkey King. My acting is particular."

Li says that the character of Monkey King has a special place in the hearts of Chinese audiences. "I gave the sense of being a real monkey throughout the whole show. Not only due to excellent makeup, but every movement was superb. I mimic a monkey the whole time and constantly change poses, greedy, naughty, or sleepy, never still for long."

## A hard life

When Li recalls the past, he is filled with pride and happiness. "I love opera, and never regret what I have chosen, I am satisfied with my life. I had many chances to perform all over the world, and it is an honor to exchange opinions with foreign friends as a cultural representative of China. I guess that Zhou Jielun, a famous hip-pop singer will not have such true fans when he is my age!"

However, Li refuses to let his son learn Beijing Opera. "Learning opera is very hard work. Now I often wonder how I persisted for so long." When studying at the China Drama School, Li spent four hours every day practicing kung fu. "The ideal was very simple.



I wanted to be famous," he said, "The teacher taught us if you wish to be the best, you must suffer the bitterest of the bitter. So I stealthily got up and exercised basic skills at 5 am every day. After lunch, I also took time to turn a few somersaults, I always sweated in cold winter."

In order to perform a role perfectly, the actor must work hard. When Li prepared to play Monkey King, he spent many hours at Beijing Zoo studying how monkeys climb, jump, eat and sleep. Moreover, he studied carefully recordings of others' performances.

Li Guang is the only actor in his troupe who can perform the role of monkey in *Nao Tiangong*, so he must perform every show. The costume, which weighs almost three kilograms has pheasant feathers in the hat and four small flags or pennants strapped to his back and high-soled boots.

When performing in the summer, he breaks into a sweat in just a few minutes. However, "The welcome of the audience helps me overcome the difficulties. And with their encouragement, I keep on climbing to the summit of opera."

## Future of opera is Bright

Now Li says he can no longer act Monkey King on the stage, however he still teaches several students in the National Beijing Opera Theatre. "To tell the truth, they perform no better than I did, maybe because the environment has changed." While Li and his colleagues strove constantly to perform better in the past, actors these days often care most about how to earn more money. The top actors in the theatre often moonlight for extra income without the approval of their troupe, and care little about how to develop their art.

According to Li, there is also a problem with management today. Theater managers do not properly use their talented actors, and first consider those actors who are obedient, he says. Thus many new operas are dead before they are born. Li believes that theaters should be managed by a theater company, so that the company can use funds properly and effectively.

However he remains optimistic about the future of opera. "At every performance, I am moved by the passion of the audience, most of whom are elderly opera lovers. But I know that the youngsters who are crazy for Andy Lau or A Mei, and crowd into the theater for Russian or Cuban ballet, will find Beijing Opera the most wonderful art in the future."

"It must be a hard and long process for opera to become the most favorite. We must change opinions and need to create new stories, adapting to the need of today's audiences."



# Monkeys in Traditional Culture

By Yu Shanshan

## Journey to the West

The popular conception of the monkey in China today is attributable largely, if not entirely, to the writings of Wu Cheng'en, who lived during the Ming dynasty. It is his *Xi You Ji (Journey to the West)* that rehabilitated the image of the monkey, which in centuries-old legends, including Taoist works, was generally portrayed as an evil or stupid, ill-omened creature.

Wu wrote *Journey to the West* in the 16th century. It is based loosely on the true story of Xuan Zang (602-664), a Buddhist monk who journeyed to India in search of Buddhist sutras. Over hundreds of years, the tale was embellished and evolved eventually into the version immortalized by Wu. Companions Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, along with Zhu Bajie, a pig spirit, and Sha Monk, a water demon, were added to the mix to protect Xuan Zang on his journey.

The story begins with and focuses on Sun Wukong, who is full of vitality and practicality. Monkey is born from a rock and eventually makes trouble for the gods. He becomes immortal by erasing his name from the Roster of Death and eats the peaches of immortality.

While escorting Tang Dynasty monk Xuan Zang on his pilgrimage, Sun Wukong forges ahead to surmount every difficulty on route to the Western Regions. He may be rash, impetuous and prone to mistakes, but he never gives up. His optimism, wisdom and wit combine with the ability to change form and size, making him a favorite of Chinese children for more than 300 years.

Thus, thanks to the Monkey King, monkey are no longer reviled as evil or stupid, but symbolize liveliness and child-like imagination and innocence. This is certainly a welcome development for those who happen to have been born in the Year of the Monkey.

The story of the Monkey King has given birth to a key character in traditional opera and a style of kung fu, as well as inspiring countless artists, and through Japanese comic books, we see the continued growth of his legend.

## Monkey King Opera

The Monkey King has a special place in the hearts of all lovers of Peking opera and its precursor, kun opera. Played by a talented *wu sheng* actor, the Monkey King commands the audience's attention with the quick, agile movements of his lithe body and his blinking eyes.

The Monkey King's costume is bright yellow and consists of a voluminous jacket and baggy trousers, which enable him to perform his move-

ments with ease and grace. He mimics a monkey the whole time, with his knees always bent and his hands held dangling in front of him, occasionally even scratching himself. His eyes have a mischievous twinkle in them as they blink at the audience.

The most famous pieces include *Nao Tian Gong (Havoc in Heaven)*, *San Da Baiguji (Monkey Beats the White-boned Demon)* and *Shi-ba Luohan Dou Wukong (18 Arhats Fight the Monkey King)*.

In *Nao Tian Gong*, the Monkey King is accompanied by a troupe of monkeys who behave just like him, but all of whom have their own characteristics – one is greedy, one naughty, one sleepy and so on – and their skillful acrobatics and movements are a continual source of delight for the audience.

## Monkey idioms

In traditional Chinese idioms, monkeys are generally accorded a distinct lack of respect, as can be seen by the following:

尖嘴猴腮 (*Jian zui hou sai*) refers to a person who has a mouth that sticks out and a chin like a monkey's – having a wretched appearance.

教猱升木 (*Jiao nao sheng mu*), teaching a monkey to climb a tree – to incite somebody to do bad things.

沐猴而冠 (*Mu hou er guan*), a monkey with a hat on – a worthless person in imposing attire.

猱猴骑土牛 (*Mi hou qi tu niu*), a monkey rides on an ox – promotion comes very slowly.

杀鸡儆猴 (*Sha ji jing hou*), killing a chicken to frighten the monkey – punish someone in order to warn another.

树倒猱猴散 (*Shu dao hu sun san*),

when a tree falls down, the monkeys that live in it soon scatter – when a person of high rank falls from grace, his attendants soon desert him.



Nao Tian Gong, illustrated by Liu Jiyou

心猿意马 (*Xin yuan yi ma*), a person's mind is restless like a jumping monkey and a running horse.

猿猴取月 (*Yuan hou qu yue*), a group of monkeys hanging from each other by their tails from a tree branch trying to scoop up the moon reflected in water – wasting one's time and energy attempting to do something impossible.

## Monkeys in traditional art

The monkey was used as symbol of fortune from the Tang and Song dynasties. In folk art traditions, paintings of monkeys symbolize the gaining of an official government post. In fact, the Chinese word for monkey, *hou*, has the same pronunciation of another character meaning "marquis" or "high official post."

## Monkey Kung Fu

The popularity of *hou quan*, or monkey kung fu, increased rapidly with the success of first Bruce Lee's then Jacky Chan's kung fu movies.

Monkey kung fu is a northern Chinese style of kung fu and is considered by many to be one of the most unusual and unorthodox styles of the martial arts.

Consisting of movements that ape those of monkeys, monkey kung fu is typified by rolling, twirling and sometimes playful movements encompassing hundreds of deceiving strikes and techniques. Its constantly changing footwork and ascending and descending stances aim to lull the opponent into a state of momentary confusion and bewilderment, allowing the monkey an opportunity to unexpectedly leap into an attack.

This style of kung fu is said to have been developed by Kau Sze, chief of an organization that provided armed escorts for gold and silver shipments, who was imprisoned for trying to help three young men escape being press-ganged by the imperial army during the Qing Dynasty.

He reputedly observed monkeys fighting and playing through a small window in his cell, and was inspired to combine their movements with the *tei tong* style of kung fu, of which he was a master. Kau called this new style *da sheng* kung fu, and categorized it into five distinct styles: lost, wooden, stone, standing and drunken monkey.

Lost monkey is the original monkey kung fu form. Its characteristics are of a monkey lost in the forest. The monkey will look very nervous yet very aware of the surroundings, and be prepared for any attack.

Wooden monkey is very deadly. He is like a monkey hidden in the wood. Every attack is quick and cruel.

Stone monkey is the strongest of the five forms. While the others use quick movement to avoid being attacked, stone monkey is more bold and direct. This style is best suited for people with a stronger, heavily built physique.

Standing monkey is based on the long-handed monkey. It uses the advantages of longer arms and legs to defeat the opponent before they have a chance to attack.

Drunken monkey is the most advanced monkey style. The movements are unusual and unpredictable. The drunken monkey will appear to be off balance and will give the opponent the opportunity to attack. When he does so, drunken monkey will unexpectedly make a sudden, vicious counter-attack.

Monkeys may be closely related to human beings; however, the human body has been "downgraded" in terms of physical strength, speed of movement and flexibility in the course of human evolution. To be able to move and fight like a monkey requires intense training and the ability to challenge the physical limits of the human body. This is why monkey kung fu is so difficult to master.



Drunken Monkey



Stone Monkey



Lost Monkey



Tall Monkey



Seal by Niu Ligang



Shaanxi style leather shadow puppet, early 20th century



Clay sculpture, Qi County, Shanxi province



## Spring Festival Special

## Maohou Monkeys

By Dong Nan

Sixty-year-old Jiang Shouyu's home is a world of "maohou", a traditional craft in which monkey figures are made using magnolia buds and cicada shells. Today it's a little known artform but it used to be one of the most popular old Beijing folk arts.

On a table in the living room, Jiang has arranged his major work, Temple Fair. It's a model of Changdian Temple Fair, featuring more than 70 monkey figures in different postures and actions, singing or watching Peking Opera, playing chess, drinking tea, enjoying food, or selling and buying goods.

Another recent work is Taking Exercise, in which monkeys are doing exercises with community sports equipment. Jiang has also made a series of monkeys who are playing volleyball, basketball and football and even dragon boat racing. Jiang says this is his way of celebrating the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

Jiang also has also produced many smaller scale works, such as monkeys riding bikes, playing qin, writing calligraphy and painting.

Maohou is said to have started in the middle of the Qing Dynasty. Two assistants in a herbal medicine shop in south Beijing were organizing medicinal ingredients. Magnolia buds and cicada shells are believed to have medicinal properties, and the two men happened to arrange them together in the shape of small monkeys and the boss of the shop found it interesting. From then on, the shop sold the two medicines together as "houliao" (material for making monkeys). People started buying them to comfort patients or as toys for children, letting them make monkey figures themselves. Maohou gradually became a popular folk art, often appearing in markets and temple fairs.

"To make a maohou is very simple," Jiang told *Beijing Today*. But the difficult part is being original and making the monkeys reflect modern life, he says. To make his work more lively and vivid, he often goes to places where people gather, to watch and observe, gathering inspirations for his new works.



## Get Cutting

By Dong Nan

These days, renowned paper cut artist Zhao Bingcheng is a busy man. By last Friday, he'd completed 60 paper cuts, ready for the Spring Festival. Since 1997, the renowned artist has cut 100 animals of the year every year. At that time, it was an ox. Now it is the monkey's turn.

Though all Zhao's cuts are made from simple red paper, they are in different shapes and express different actions. Some are simple, some are abstract, and some are realistic, showing monkeys eating peaches, playing with magpies and bats, and some show monkeys lying on big shoe-shaped gold ingots. These are all symbolic. In Chinese culture, peaches indicate longevity, magpies indicate happiness, bats are for luck and gold ingots symbolize fortune.

"I think of the images of those monkeys day and night. Sometimes, I have already gone to bed when suddenly I have an idea, I sit up and draw my thought on the paper," said 74-year-old Zhao. The thumb, forefinger and middle finger of the old man's right hand are full of calluses because of using scissors on his creations all day long.

According to Zhao, there are two main styles of paper cutting in China, the northern style and the southern style. The northern style is straightforward and bold, while the southern style is elegant and dainty. But Zhao blends the styles of north and south, making his works simple, natural and refined.

Zhao was born in the countryside of Shanxi province, where paper cutting is an important way to celebrate the Spring Festival. Zhao developed a strong predilection for the art as a teenager. But only when he retired from work had he enough time of his own to pursue his artistic leanings.

As well as his many cuts of traditional Chinese animals, Zhao has made thousands of paper cuts representing themes of happiness, longevity, festivals, ceremonies and luck. He told *Beijing Today* that a collection of them will be published later this year.



## Faces of the Opera

By Nebula Dong

Many Peking Opera faces can be found in the market, and many artists are in this trade. But Yang Yudong's works come with headpieces and costumes, which distinguish his productions from others.

One of the major characters in Peking Opera is the monkey king. Yang explained to *Beijing Today* that a variety of different faces and costumes have been developed for this character because famous

players over the years would have different costumes and different methods, even if the play is the same.

"The first player who was well-known for playing the monkey king was Yang Yuelou, who was known as 'Monkey Yang'. Then came his son Yang Xiaolou at the end of the Qing Dynasty, then Li Wanchun, Li Shaochun and Li Changchun in the middle of the last century," says Yang. "And their costumes and face patterns had developed step by step. All the faces I make follow photos of that time, so they are most faithful to the original designs."

Yang's father ran the Xidan Theater at the beginning of the founding of The People's Republic of China, inspiring Yang's love of Peking Opera from his childhood days. Yang's room was next to the stage. He broke a hole in the wooden wall to peep in on the operas everyday. Later he learnt fine arts, such as beadwork and Peking Opera costume processing. These experiences all formed his ability to make his beautiful opera faces till this day.

## Hands of Clay

By Dong Nan  
Zhou

Chongshan, clay figurine artist, calls his home "Garden of Creatures", filled as it is with so many of his animal creations. This being the year of the monkey, there's a particularly simian atmosphere in his home.

His monkeys are small, only three to four centimeters in height. The cute little figures hold big peaches, stolen from the garden of heaven! They are so happy they are laughing and eager to taste the delicious fruit.

The expressions of the monkeys are especially lifelike. Their eyes are painted gold and have a kind of glow, and their smiles are very deep, making them look proud and satisfied.

Zhou uses simple yellow clay, which he can buy in a big bag for six yuan in artists' materials shops. Usually, Zhou makes up a semi-finished product and then pinches and sculpts the finer details, such as facial features and hands, with tools such as a toothpick.

"The biggest feature of my clay figurines is their smallness," Zhou told *Beijing Today*, "the biggest one is but four centimeters or so."

Zhou says he never paints his figurines, unlike other artists. He would rather keep the work in its natural color and uses only gold or red to decorate the figures. This gives the mini sculptures a more western look.

Zhou says he came up with the idea to sculpt these tiny figurines after traveling all over the country to study folk arts. His skill is not traditional, but all his products contain traditional meanings for luck.

During the Spring Festival, Zhou Chongshan will sell some of his artworks in the basement of Xindongan Market.



## Can You See It?

By Dong Nan

One of Hao Deli's Monkey King kites is as high as a man. The brave monkey is painted red and carries a stick.

"Kites are one of China's great contributions to the world," says Hao, a renowned kite artist. "Now foreign countries also look at kite flying as a sport, but traditional Chinese kite makers pay more attention to the painting of them."

Hao's Monkey King kite is mainly based on the Peking Opera character. He uses traditional Chinese realistic ways to paint, but he always uses fresh and vivid colors such as red, yellow, blue and pink together, which is unusual in traditional Chinese painting. Hao explains this is so that people can appreciate the artwork on his kites even if they're high up in the air.

"The four steps of making a kite are fastening, pasting, painting and flying, and flying is the last and absolutely necessary part. A kite which cannot fly is not a kite at all, no matter how beautiful it is," says Hao.

Many of Hao's kites have won prizes, not only in folk art competitions but also in sport competitions. Hao Deli is 60 years old and also born in the year of monkey. He said he loved making kites in his childhood, but seldom had time when he was growing up. Only when his son once asked him to make a kite to bring to school in the 1980s did he rediscover the joy of this art. Appropriately, the first kite he made for his son was one of a Monkey King.

From then on, his passion increased, and his skill improved day by day. Now, Hao is one of only few kite artists left in China who can make large scale kites decorated with life-size characters.

## Fairytales in Dough

By Nebula Dong

Anyone who sees Yu Weishun's dough figurine, Monkey King, will be astonished by its dazzling wealth of detail. All the drapes and patterns of cloth, items of armor, even the cuff ribbons look incredibly vivid.

Another of Yu's works, *Sanda Baiguojing* (Beat the White Boned Demon) comes from *Xiyouji* (*Journey to the West*), a renowned Chinese fantasy tale of the Ming Dynasty. In the story, the monkey king raises his stick to bring down the white-boned demon, disguised as an old man.

"The major characteristic of dough figurines is their daintiness," says Yu. "Since the dough is especially soft and has the best plasticity, artists are able to make the most detailed figures."

According to Yu, the history of dough figurines can be dated back to the Han Dynasty more than 2,000 years ago, when people used dough for figures used at sacrifices. There are two main branches of this art in China, those of Beijing and Shandong Province. But Shandong figurines are less adorned and delicate.

Of course, the figurines are not made out of the same dough we use to make everyday bread or pastry. It is mixed up with honey and preservatives to keep it from cracking. The finished product is as hard as stone and can be kept for many years. Another feature of dough art is that the color is mixed in the material before being molded into its final form, unlike clay which is painted afterwards.

Yu says he's less interested in modern pursuits and more taken up with ancient Chinese myth and literature, legendary figures such as the monkey king and Baxian (Eight Immortals). He says these things from traditional culture have a deeper meaning.

Yu's day job is actually that of a middle school physical education teacher. He has involved himself in the art of dough figurines as a hobby for the last twenty years. This "luxurious" hobby takes up almost all of his leisure time; even a middle-sized work takes him six to eight hours to finish.



- ① Maohou by Jiang Shouyu  
②, ③ Paper cut by Zhao Bingcheng  
④ Peking Opera face by Yang Yudong  
Photo by Tian Xiaotong  
⑤, ⑥ Clay figurine by Zhou Chongshan  
⑦ Kite by Hao Deli Photo by Tian Xiaotong  
⑧ Dough figurine by Yu Weishun  
Photo by Geng Lei



Spring Festival Special

# Love a Monkey

By Zhao Hongyi

**M**onkeys are always thought of as being smart and mischievous. Of the 371 species of monkeys and gibbons in the world, China has 21. The Rhesus monkey is the most common type in China, thought their numbers have dwindled to 200,000 from more than a million half a century ago.



**Taiwan macaque:** Inhabits only the rocky mountains and forests in the middle and southern parts of Taiwan. They eat fruit, leaves and insects. There are around 2,000 of them in Taiwan.

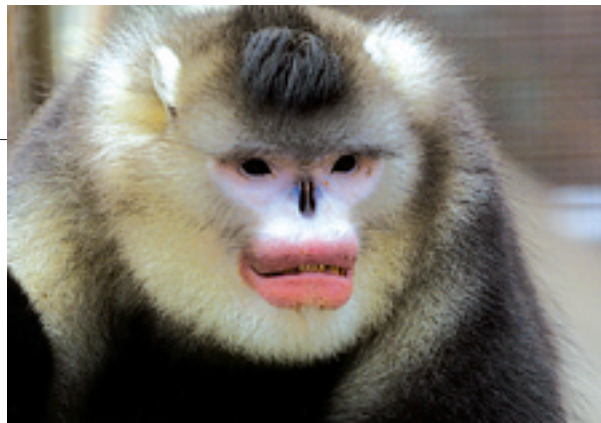


**Tibetan macaque:** Ironically not to be found in Tibet. Tibetan macaques live mainly in the broad-leaf forests and rocky mountains in the provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, Guizhou, Yunnan and Guangxi in the west, and Fujian and Guangdong in the east. They prefer to live in groups of 40-50. There are estimated to be 10,000 of them in China. Plants, insects, frogs, birds and bird eggs are their major food sources.



**Golden snub-nosed monkey:** Lives in the 1,500-3,300 meters high coniferous forests in Sichuan, Gansu, Shanxi and Hubei. A group, or a family, consists of a male and 3-5 females and baby monkeys. Total numbers are estimated at 15,000. The Golden monkey's face is blue with a snub nose and gold shining fur covers its body.

**Grey snub-nosed monkey:** To be found only in the Fanjingshan National Reserve in Guizhou Province. Its numbers are estimated at just 750. Major foods include tree leaves, buds, bark and fruit.



**Black snub-nose monkey:** This is one of the world's 25 most endangered primates, numbering less than 2,000. They inhabit the mountain forests 3,300-4,100 meters above sea-level in southeastern Tibet and northwest Yunnan. Strict social classes exist in each group which usually contains 20-60 monkeys. They eat coniferous tree leaves, flower buds, bamboo roots and leaves.



**White-headed leaf monkey:** Lives only in tropical and sub-tropical hills in the four counties of Chongzuo, Longzhou, Fusui and Ningming in Guangxi. They live in groups that usually consist of several to a dozen. During wintertime, the number can increase to two to three dozen. This species is also endangered, numbering only around 600.

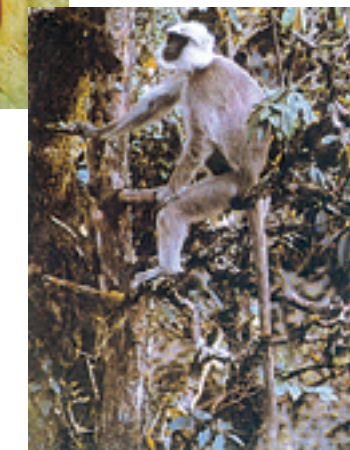
**Black-crested gibbon:** A survey conducted last summer found only 13 black-crested gibbons still living in the virgin tropical rain forests on Hainan Island. Males are black, while females have gold fur with black crests on their heads. Each family consists of one male and two females.



**Slow loris:** Quite rare in Guangxi and Yunnan (less than 2,000), but common in the tropical rain forests of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia.



**Pigtail macaque:** Widely distributed in south and southeast Asia. At least 3,000 were known to exist in Yunnan Province in the 1950s but this number has fallen to less than 1,000 now.



**Grey langur:** Originating in India, Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Kashmir, around 1,000 are now living in southeastern Tibet. Tibetans regard it as a holy animal and never hunt it. But cultivation of the forests, though quite conservative, is destroying its environment. Today it can be found only in the deep forest.



**White-handed gibbon:** Mostly found in Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Quite rare in China with a population of less than 30.

**Pygmy loris:** Found in the tropical and sub-tropical forests in southeastern Yunnan. Average length is between 21 and 25 centimeters. Its fur is short but thick and curly.



**Bear macaque:** Numbers of the bear macaque are estimated at 300,000. Most of them live in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Myanmar, Thailand and Laos. In China, there are less than 8,000, living in the southern and southeastern parts of Tibet, Yunnan and Guangxi.



**White-cheeked gibbon:** Mostly found in Vietnam and Laos. Less than 50 are living in the high mountainous areas in southwestern Yunnan bordering the two countries. The total population is less than 350, with 100 in the northern part of Vietnam and 200 in Laos.

**Phayre's langur:** Mainly found in the tropical and subtropical rain forests in south and southeast Asia. Nearly 15,000 live in the south and another 2,000 in the west of Yunnan Province.

**Francois leaf monkey:** Found only in Vietnam, Laos and Guangxi, Guizhou and Yunnan in China. Total number in China is around 8,000.

**Rhesus macaque, or Rhesus monkey:** Found widely in China and around the world, from tropical forests in India to colder climes in Japan. But their numbers are decreasing. The average adult is between 48 and 64 centimeters and the monkey's life span is 25-30 years. Rhesus monkeys have wide tastes, eating everything from seeds and branches to insects and meat. They're probably best-known in China for acrobatic performances in zoos and circuses.



**Stump-tail macaque:** Widely distributed in dense forests and rain forests in Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Guizhou, Jiangxi, Hunan and Yunnan, as well as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh, India and Malaysia. Total population is around 70,000.



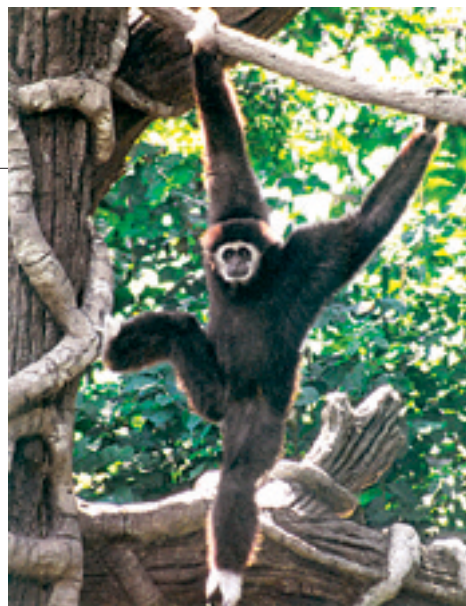
**Black gibbon:** Five out of the six sub-species have been found in China's Yunnan Province.



**Capped langur:** The langur is a vegetarian, eating mainly mature leaves and fruit. Langurs seldom leave the trees. They take water from dew or rain drenched leaves. In China, the capped langur is very rare. The numbers are not known. The golden-capped langur and black-capped langur live in India and Nepal. The common langur is one of the most commonly seen species in Bhutan and throughout the Himalayas. Like the rhesus macaque, this species is sacred to many Himalayan peoples.



**Hoolock gibbon, White-browed gibbon:** The small, tailless gibbon is only found in the southern part of Yunnan. It weighs around 7-8 kilograms. Total length is between 45 and 58 centimeters. An adult male is brownish black and the female is pale white or yellow.





Spring Festival Special



1 Gilt Silver Monkey  
Warring States Period  
(475-221BC)

The silver monkey was unearthed by archeologists in 1977 at the site of the ancient capital of the State of Lu in Qufu, Shandong Province.

With its left arm stretching upwards, paws bending like a hook, right arm sustaining the weight of the body, with left leg stretching backwards, and right leg bending inwards, the whole posture looks like a freeze frame of a monkey climbing. The accurate and vivid shape shows the superb craftsmanship of the ancient artisans.

Its shoulders, arms, back and legs were all decorated with gold. There is a round knot at its back, indicating the figure was intended as a relatively humble belt hook.



2 White Jade Monkey  
Pendant  
Warring States Period (475-221BC)

Carved in the round form of a monkey, highly polished, its eyes, nose and mouth are finely detailed, with a piercing near the hand and on the right side of its neck for the string.



3 Wooden Monkey  
Western Han Dynasty (206BC-24AD)

The monkey stretches out its arms holding a piece of wood, legs bending to its belly. The artist managed to capture the moment before the monkey is about to jump. Its face is rich in detail, and the carving skills are sophisticated. The piece was unearthed from a Western Han Dynasty tomb in Gaoyou, Jiangsu Province, and is now kept at Nanjing Museum.



5 Apes Hanging on a Tree  
by Yi Yuanji  
Song Dynasty (960-1279)  
Color on silk

A cypress tree stands on a slope, one small ape hanging on the upper branch and another on the trunk. Another ape squats on the branch of the neighboring tree.

All the three apes are staring intensely at the ground, where there are two small crabs in the stone and grass.

In traditional Chinese culture, coming top in the imperial examinations and getting promoted were very important issues for scholars. Apes and monkeys were not only believed to be very smart and vigorous, but the pronunciation of the words for them is similar to words meaning 'Number 1' or 'high official' in Chinese.

The painting, though not signed, is believed to have been produced by well-known painter Yi Yuanji of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). The highly attractive composition and delicate brush strokes make the painting remarkably true to life.



4 Tang sancai (three  
color glazed)  
monkey head  
Tang Dynasty (618-907)



9 Ancient Tree and the Ape  
Painted by Zhang Daqian, 1959  
Ink color on paper

Zhang Yuan, also known as Daqian (1899-1983), was crazy about apes, and began to paint the

animal in his 30s. He also liked to imitate works by Yi Yuanji. According to Zhang, the night before his birth, his mother dreamed of an old man who gave her a black ape sitting on a shining gong. She woke up and told the family of her strange dream. So when Zhang Daqian was born, his family members believed that he was the black ape reincarnated. Later when he grew up, Daqian went to Shanghai and studied painting and calligraphy under the guidance of Zeng Xi. After hearing this story, Zeng advised Daqian to take the name Yuan, which has the same pronunciation as the word for ape.



6 Bottle with Monkey and  
Deer Design  
Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227)

The black glaze monkey and deer is a common design, symbolizing good luck. The monkey stands for high official position and the deer stands for fortune. The shape of the bottle is very beautiful with a simple yet dramatic design. Black glaze design on white glaze is rarely seen in Western Xia antiques. The bottle reflects the superior standards of porcelain making of that period. It is now kept in the Forbidden City.



7 Kneeling Monkey  
Holding Peach  
Yuan to early Ming Dynasty  
(1279-1368 / 1368-1644)

The yellow jade monkey is holding up a peach, symbolizing longevity, with both paws. A monkey holding a peach became a common decorative element in Chinese pottery in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The similarity of the iconography to that of Hanuman, the monkey god of Indian legend, is striking. The color of the jade used here is also suggestive of a Yuan date but an early Ming date cannot be ruled out.



8 Bronze Monkey  
Head  
Cast in the mid-Qing  
Dynasty (1644-1911)

The bronze monkey head, along with 11 other animals' heads, were designed to form part of a clock in Yuanmingyuan Garden in the 1750s. It was lost after the garden was looted by the allied forces of the British and French invaders.

Almost 120 years later in October 1987, the monkey head reappeared at Sotheby's auction house in New York. Taipei collector Cai Chenyang bought it for NT\$8.5 million dollars, approximately two million yuan.

After circulating among Taipei collectors for ten years, the piece was put up for sale at Christie's auction in Hong Kong in April 2000, and Poly Corporation bought it for HK\$7.7 million dollars, along with an ox head and tiger head for HK\$7.7 million dollars and HK\$14.4 million dollars respectively. It is now in the collection of Poly Museum.